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A
PRACTICAL TREATISE
ON
THE ORDINARY OPERATIONS
OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT.

A
PRACTICAL TREATISE
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ORDINARY OPERATIONS
OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. G. S. FABER, B. D.
RECTOR OF LONG-NEWTON, IN THE COUNTY AND DIOCESE
OF DURHAM.

Πνευμα ζωοποιεῖ. 2 Cor. iii. 6.

Οἱ σαρκικοὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ πράσσειν οὐ δύνανται, οὐδὲ
οἱ πνευματικοὶ τὰ σαρκικά. Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes.

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TO
THE INHABITANTS
OF THE THREE PARISHES OF
STOCKTON-UPON-TEES, REDMARSHALL,
AND LONG-NEWTON;
OF WHICH, IN THE COURSE OF THE LAST SEVEN YEARS, BY
THE UNREMITTING KINDNESS OF ONE REVERED PATRON,
THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN SUCCESSIVELY VICAR OR
RECTOR; THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED BY THEIR
SINCERE FRIEND AND WELL-WISHER,

G. S. FABER

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reader will perceive by the date annexed to the *Preface*, that this work has been written several years. In fact, the author was in no haste to publish on a subject which, however important, requires some degree of prudence in the discussion. It has been his wish to exhibit what he believes, to the best of his judgment, to be the doctrines and practice taught by that pure and apostolical Church, of which he feels it his privilege to be a minister. In revising what he has written, though after a considerable period of time, he did not find that any alterations were necessary beyond mere verbal corrections.

Long-Newton Rectory,

Jan. 16, 1813.

PREFACE.

EVERY person, who is in the least degree acquainted with the corruption of the human heart, will readily acknowledge, that his own unassisted abilities are totally unequal to the task of faithfully serving God. Repeated violations of the most solemn resolutions of amendment have shown him his weakness; and his numerous lapses have woefully convinced him, that he stands in need of some divine conductor to lead

him in safety through the perilous journey of life. Such a guide is promised in Scripture to *every* sincere Christian.

We are not to suppose, that the *ordinary* operations of the Holy Spirit were confined to the apostolic age. Human nature is much alike, at all periods, and in all countries. Though Christianity is now established, and though *miraculous* interference is no longer necessary to the well-being of the Church; yet the present race of men will never be essentially better than their heathen predecessors, so long as they rest satisfied with having only outwardly embraced the religion of the Messiah. A mere hypocritical and external profession of faith cannot be pleasing to that God, who regards *motives* no less than *actions*. A radical change

must take place in the heart, as well as an outward reformation in the manners ; and this change can only be effected by the agency of some superior power. The heart is as much averse now to the genuine practice of piety, as it was in the days of the Apostles ; and, though we have no longer to combat the horrors of persecution, we have still to struggle with the unwillingness and corruption of the soul. If the whole of religion consisted in the bare belief of certain tenets and in the due observance of certain ceremonies, we should find very little difficulty in becoming thoroughly religious characters. But, when we are called upon to begin the work of self-reformation ; when we are required to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength ; when we are enjoined to pre-

fer, upon all occasions, his will to our own, and to sacrifice our bosom sins, our darling vices, upon the altar of Christianity: then commences the struggle: the inbred venom of our nature immediately shows itself; our very spirit rises both against the law and the lawgiver; and we discover the utter impossibility of working any change in our affections merely by our own efforts. No *human* arguments can persuade a man to love what he hates, and to delight in what he detests. Submission they may perhaps teach him; but it will be the sullen submission of a slave, not the cheerful acquiescence of a son. To produce this change is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit; and, since none but he can produce it, his ordinary influence is absolutely and universally necessary at présent,

and will be equally so even to the very end of the world.

In the following pages, I have endeavoured to state what appears to me the plain doctrine of Scripture and the Church of England. Though we are repeatedly assured by the word of God, that of ourselves we can do no good thing; yet we are never represented as mere machines, subjected to an overwhelming and irresistible influence. The aid of the Holy Spirit is freely offered unto *all*; nor does that blessed Person cease to *strive* even with the most profligate, till they have obstinately rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The still small voice of conscience, which is in effect the voice of God, long continues to admonish them: and the ex-

treme difficulty, which they find in silencing it, sufficiently shows how unwilling the Almighty is that *any* should perish. *All*, that will, may be saved ; for our Lord hath expressly declared, that, *who-soever* cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast him out. Let *none* therefore despair on the ground of their being rejected by a tremendous and irreversible decree of exclusion : for surely, if such a decree existed, God's repeated expostulations with sinners for slighting his gracious offers, when at the same time they lay under a *fatal necessity* of slighting them, would be a solemn mockery, unworthy of a being of infinite mercy and holiness.

In fact, the general experience of mankind perfectly agrees with scripture. There never yet was a good man who did

not find that he both required and received divine assistance to enable him to overcome his corruptions; and there never yet was a bad man, who did not perceive somewhat within him forcibly restraining him from the commission of sin, and warmly urging him to the practice of holiness. Half of the follies and vanities of the world are mere contrivances to silence this troublesome monitor. *Men love darkness rather than light, simply because their deeds are evil.*

May 21, 1800.

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A
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CHAP. I.

The necessity of the ordinary operations of the Spirit shown from a view of the state of man by nature ; his understanding, his will, and his affections, being all depraved in consequence of original sin.

IN the last solemn discourse, which our blessed Lord addressed to his disciples immediately before his bitter sufferings upon the cross, he promised them another Comforter, who should abide with them for ever. Though he himself was about to be shortly separated from them and to sit down at the right hand of his Father,

yet his place should be abundantly supplied by the effusion of the Spirit of truth. The world indeed cannot receive this divine Person, *because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him*; but it is the peculiar characteristic of the true disciples of Christ, that they *do* know him, *for he dwelleth with them, and shall be in them.** Accordingly, in due season, and pursuant to the declaration of Christ, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and conferred upon them spiritual gifts both *extraordinary* and *ordinary*. By the reception of *the former* they were specially qualified to discharge the duties of their important office, and were awfully and incontrovertibly accredited to every nation as the peculiar delegates of heaven: by the reception of *the latter* they were eminently endowed with all the pure dispositions of a renewed heart, and were enabled to testify the reality of their internal change by an exact holiness of life and conversation.

* John xiv. 16.

Extraordinary gifts they received for the benefit of the church: *ordinary* gifts they received for their own personal benefit. *Extraordinary* gifts were conferred upon a *few* only: of those *ordinary* gifts, without which no real sanctification can be attained, without which a man must labour under a physical incapacity of enjoying the kingdom of heaven, it is the privilege of *every* genuine Christian to be a partaker. They are *ordinary*, not as inferior in point of importance to the possessor (for in *this* respect they are superior;) but as gifts ordinarily bestowed upon *all* the faithful, and not limited after an extraordinary manner to a *few*.

Since those miraculous powers, which were conferred upon the founders of the Christian church, were designed only for a special and determinate purpose; as that purpose was gradually accomplished, the powers were gradually withdrawn, until at length they entirely ceased. The religion of the Messiah, after the

lapse of three centuries, obtained a firm establishment ; princes became its nursing fathers ; and they who refused to yield to the voice of reason and evidence, had no longer conviction forced upon them by a supernatural interference of heaven. Signs and wonders ceased to attend the preaching of the Gospel ; yet the promise, that the Holy Spirit should abide for ever with the disciples of Christ, remained unbroken, and we trust *will* remain unbroken to the very end of time. Neither the sight of miracles, nor the ability of performing them, has simply and *per se* any effect upon the human heart. They may perhaps dreadfully convince the understanding ; but God alone can convert the soul. The state of man by nature is precisely the same now, as it was in the days of the Apostles : consequently, if it were *then* necessary that the Holy Spirit should *reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment* : it is no less necessary *in the present age*. The world indeed is called *Christian* ; but

practical infidelity still flourishes in all its baneful luxuriancy. It matters not what a man is denominated, so long as his heart is alienated from God; and a bare assent of his understanding will be of little avail, if his life prove him to be the slave of Satan. On this account the *ordinary* operations of the Spirit are continued though the *extraordinary* ones have long been unknown in the church of Christ.

A state of nature is constantly opposed in Scripture to *a state of grace*. The first is the wretched inheritance bequeathed to us by our common progenitor Adam: the second is the free and unmerited gift of God the Father, purchased for us by God the Son, and conveyed to us by God the Holy Ghost. The whole then of the work, carried on in the soul of man by the third person of the blessed Trinity, may be briefly defined; *a gradual restoration of that image of God, in the likeness of which Adam was created, and the lineaments of which were*

*totally obliterated by sin.** The work is begun, continued, and perfected, by the Holy Spirit. He is equally the author and the finisher of our faith : and without him we can do no good thing. From the first faint motions of

* “To discover wherein such image and likeness consisted, what better method can we take, than to inquire wherein consist that divine image and likeness, which, as the Scriptures of the New Testament inform us, were restored in human nature, through the redemption and grace of Christ, who was manifested for that purpose. The image restored was the image lost ; and the image lost was that, in which Adam was created. The expressions, employed by the penmen of the New Testament, plainly point out to us this method of proceeding—*Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him—Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* The divine image then is to be found in the understanding, and the will ; in the understanding, which knows the truth, and in the will which loves it.—This divine image is restored in human nature by the word of Christ enlightening the understanding, and the grace of Christ rectifying the will.” *Bp. Horne’s Sermons*, vol. i. p. 20, 21, 22.

spiritual life to its final consummation in the realms of everlasting happiness. all the honour and all the glory of our growth in grace be ascribed unto him !

When the Almighty ceased from the work of creation, he pronounced all that he had made to be very good. The new world was as yet free from the inroads of sin, and from the curse of sterility.

... Nature then
Wanton'd as in her prime, and play'd at will
Her virgin fancies

The whole creation smiled upon man, and the golden age of the poets was realized. Blessed with perfect health both mental and corporeal, our heaven-born progenitor was equally unconscious of the stings of guilt and the pangs of disease. His understanding was unclouded with the mists of vice, ignorance, and error ;

his will, though absolutely free, was yet entirely devoted to the service of God; and his affections, warm, vigorous, and undivided, were ardently bent upon the great fountain of his existence. Though vested in an earthly body, his soul was as the soul of an angel, pure, just, and upright. He was uncontaminated with the smallest sin, and free from even the slightest taint of pollution. His passions, perfectly under the guidance of his reason, yielded a ready and cheerful obedience to the dictates of his conscience; an obedience, not constrained and irksome, but full, unreserved, and attended with sensations of unmixed delight. Such was man when he came forth from the hand of his Creator, the image of God stamped upon his soul and influencing all his actions.

This blissful state of innocence was soon forfeited by our first parents. In an evil hour they yielded to the suggestions of the tempter, and violated the express command of God.

Pride, that most deeply rooted bane of our nature, was now, for the first time, infused into the heart of the woman. She vainly desired a greater share of wisdom, than God had been pleased to grant unto her; and, in order to obtain that wisdom, scrupled not to disobey her Maker. The man followed her example, and joined her in a mad rebellion against heaven. Sin entered into the world, and death closely followed its footsteps. The image of God was obliterated, and the image of Satan was erected in its stead.

Mysterious as the doctrine of *original depravity* may be, no man, unless he be totally unacquainted with the workings of his own heart, can possibly doubt its actual existence. Some persons indeed are so far blinded by the deceitfulness of sin as to deny the doctrine in question; but "I verily believe," to use the words of the excellent Beveridge, "that the

want of such a due sense of themselves argues as much original corruption, as murder and whoredom do actual pollution : and I shall ever suspect those to be the most under the power of that corruption, that labour most by arguments to divest it of its power.”*

I. Examine first *the understanding*, and you will find it, at least so far as relates to spiritual things, dark and confused.

The Apostle, describing the state of the world previous to the diffusion of Christian knowledge, asserts, that men had become *vain in their imaginations*, and that *their foolish heart was darkened*; that *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*; and, though proud of their attainments in a subtle philosophy, that in the sight of God they were *without understanding*.† In a similar manner he elsewhere

* Private Thoughts, Art. iv. † Rom. i. 21, 22, 31.

declares, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

His knowledge of divine matters, in consequence of his being debased by the fall, is as much inferior to true heavenly wisdom, as the instinct of a brute is to the reason of a human being. On this account, as St. Paul scruples not strongly to express himself, even the wisdom of the Almighty himself, is foolishness to man in a state of nature. Having no faculties capable *in themselves* of embracing spiritual truths, he is as much unqualified to decide upon them, as a man born blind is to discriminate between the various tints of the rainbow ; for, as the one is defective in spiritual, so is the other in corporal, discernment. No treatise on light and colours, however minute and accurate, can give a distinct idea of their nature to

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

a man born blind ; nor can any description of spiritual things, however just, communicate a clear conception of them to him whose understanding is darkened. The reason, which the Apostle gives, is simply *because they must be spiritually discerned* ; consequently, till that spiritual discernment be communicated, heavenly wisdom *must* and *will* appear foolishness in his eyes. “ Let us then,” as we are well exhorted by the Church in one of her homilies ; “ Let us meekly call upon the bountiful Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to inspire us with his presence, that we may be able to hear the goodness of God to our salvation. For without his lively inspiration we cannot so much as speak the name of the Mediator. No man can say, that *Jesus is the Lord*, but by the Holy Ghost. Much less should we be able to understand these great mysteries, that be opened to us by Christ. *For we have received*, saith St. Paul, *not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God*, for this purpose, *that we may know the things which*

are freely given to us of God. In the power of the Holy Ghost resteth all ability to know God and to please him. It is he, that purifieth the mind by his secret working. He enlighteneth the heart to conceive worthy thoughts of Almighty God.”*

A work of Cicero, written expressly upon the nature of the gods, has been providentially handed down to us; and it affords the most striking comment possible on the scriptural doctrine of *the ignorance of man*. This great philosopher has shown at large, to the entire satisfaction of every Christian reader, how totally blind the three most celebrated sects of antiquity were in all those points which are placed beyond the cognizance of sense. With a mind alive to all the beauties of composition, and versed in all the researches of philosophy; with abilities rarely equalled, perhaps never

* Homil for Rogat Week Part iii.

excelled ; the Roman orator ventures to soar beyond the bounds of the material creation, and to scrutinize the nature of the Omnipotent. How are the mighty fallen ! The grossest ignorance, and the strangest errors, are the principal characteristics of his celebrated treatise. Once, indeed, a consciousness of human inability extorts from him a confession, that no man ever became great without some divine inspiration :* but, scarcely has this memorable sentiment flowed from his pen, ere the doctrine of an universal providence is expressly denied by the advocate of one of the contending sects.†

Such was the wisdom of the philosophers ; and thus was their *understanding darkened*,

* Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo adflatu divino unquam fuit." Cicer. de Nat. Deor. l. ii. c. 66.

† " Magna Di curant, parva negligunt." Ibid. See also Tusc. Quæst. l. iii. in init.—Plat. Apol. Socrat. sect. 18.—Plat. Phæd. sect. 35.—Max. Tyr. Dissert. 22.—Stob. Excerpt. de mor. Tit. 1.

*being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart.**

II. Let the will next be brought to the test, and we shall find it no less deficient than the understanding.

Our inclinations, resolutely bent upon earthly and sensual enjoyments, revolt from every thing divine and spiritual ; insomuch that even a heathen moralist could feel and acknowledge their depravation :

O pronæ in terras animæ, et cœlestium inanes !

Hence, though we are commanded to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling* : yet we are informed at the same time, that it is *God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*† God must first give

* Ephes. iv. 18.

† Philip. ii. 13.

us the will, and afterwards the power ; otherwise we shall for ever remain in a state of spiritual insufficiency. Our Lord himself, in perfect harmony with his inspired Apostle, declares expressly : *No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.** He speaks of us also as being naturally in a state of bondage, instead of enjoying the high prerogative of freedom : *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.†* This plain declaration gave high offence to the Jews ; but Christ, so far from retracting it, asserted, that *all* those, who commit sin (and what man is impeccable ?) are the servants of sin. To that blessed person alone we must look for our emancipation : *If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.‡*

* John vi. 44.

† John viii. 32.

‡ John viii. 36.

Upon these solid scriptural grounds, the Church of England rightly decides, that “the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will and working with us when we have that good will.”* Agreeably to such principles one of the prayers in her Liturgy is constructed “Though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us.” And the very same doctrine is taught in the second part of her Homily *on the misery of man*. “Thus we have heard how evil we be of ourselves; how of ourselves and by ourselves we have no goodness, help, or

* Art. 10.

salvation, but contrariwise sin, damnation, and death everlasting : which if we duly weigh and consider, we shall the better understand the great mercy of God, and how our salvation cometh only by Christ : for in ourselves, as of ourselves, we find nothing whereby we may be delivered from this miserable captivity, into the which we are cast through the envy of the devil, by breaking of God's commandment in our first parent Adam. We are all become unclean, but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God's wrath, but are not able to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep that run astray, but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheep-fold ; so great is our imperfection and weakness."*

* The main hinge of the ancient controversies between Augustine and Pelagius, and between Luther and the Pa-

III. We have hitherto considered the depravation of *the understanding*, and the distortion of *the will*, in consequence of the fall of Adam ; let us next take a view of *the heart* and *the affections*.

1. The passions of love and hatred do not appear to have been so much destroyed, as perverted, at the time of the fall. When man came pure and perfect from the hands of his Maker, the passions were directed to their proper objects. God, and holiness, were loved ; sin, and impurity, were hated. But, after our first parents had yielded to the temptations of

pists, turned upon the doctrine of human sufficiency and the meritorious dignity of good works. An epistle of the African council, at which Aurelius of Carthage presided, to Innocent Bishop of Rome, briefly states the heads of this contested subject. See August. Epist. 90 and 46.—Luther. Enarrat. Fol. 6. c.—Melanct. Loc. Theol. p. 89.

Satan, an almost total inversion of the former affections of the heart took place. Man then began to hate what he ought to love, and to love what he ought to hate. The pure and holy law of God, which thwarts his vicious inclinations, became the object of his fiercest aversion ; while, on the contrary, wickedness became his pleasure and delight.* The second of these

* “ Grace doth not pluck up by the roots and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are distempered by sin ; that were an extreme remedy to cure by killing, and heal by cutting off : no, but it corrects the distemper in them : it dries not up this main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud it is full of in its wrong course, or calls it to its right channel by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself into the ocean of goodness. The Holy Spirit turns the love of the soul towards God in Christ, for in that way only can it apprehend his love ; so then, Jesus Christ is the first object of this divine love : he is *medium unionis*, through whom God conveys the sense of his love to the soul, and receives back its love to him.” Archb. Leighton’s Comment. on 1 Peter i. 8, 9.

propensities is ever active ; the first not unfrequently appears for a season to lie dormant. This lurking enmity towards God slumbered in the hearts of the Jews for some ages previous to the advent of the Messiah ; but, when the spirituality of his preaching roused their consciences and showed them their inward abominations, their enmity awoke, strong as death and cruel as the grave.

This doctrine, however, is not unfrequently denied even on the ground of personal experience ; and those, who urge it, are thought to paint human nature in much blacker colours than she really deserves. It may perhaps be allowed, that we have frailties, venial frailties ; but our nature is asserted to be in the main ever favourable to virtue, and averse to vice.

The degree of truth, which such notions possess, is best ascertained by simple matter of fact. In the person of our blessed Saviour

virtue itself was embodied. Perfectly just, and absolutely free from even the slightest suspicion of criminality, Christ was the bright exemplar of the doctrines which he preached. If the love of virtue then be *inherent* in the human mind, the Lord of life, condescending to visit the haunts of men, must surely have been the object of their warmest devotion and their most affectionate adoration. Yet was he hated, reviled, and persecuted even to death, notwithstanding our supposed natural propensity to virtue. In a similar manner his disciples, the labour of whose life consisted in imitating their divine master, were *hated of all nations*, as their Lord had expressly foretold,* *for his name's sake*. In other words, the more they approximated to perfect virtue, the greater degree of odium they incurred. An awful instance of the bitter enmity of the natural man against God and all his faithful servants is af-

* Matt xxiv. 9.

forded us in the account of the death of St. Stephen. The judges, who presided in the mock trial of the protomartyr, even *gnashed on him with their teeth* ;* the violent workings of rage in their hearts causing them to resemble wild beasts rather than men ; nor could their animosity be quenched except in the blood of their devoted victim.

Should it be said, that these are *particular* instances selected only from the history of a *single* nation, let us cast our eyes around and contemplate the labours of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Whence was it that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city ? Whence, but because the holiness of his life, and the vehemence of his eloquence, held up a mirror before the eyes of men, which too faithfully reflected their manifold iniquities ? To approach

* Acts vii. 54.

nearer to our own times : what was it, that called down the fury of Popery upon the martyrs of the Protestant Church ? The same principle, which crucified the Lord of life and persecuted his Apostles, consigned to the flames a Cranmer, a Latimer, and a Ridley. Now, this repeated opposition to the truth can only be accounted for upon the scriptural doctrine, that *the carnal mind is enmity with God.** He, who searcheth the very heart and the reins, hath declared, that *light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.†*

The fact is, men are apt to deceive themselves into a belief, that their minds are not at enmity

* Rom. viii. 9.

† John iii. 19.

with God, by the common delusion of performing their duty only by halves. Different persons are so differently constituted, that duties are more or less irksome to them, exactly in the proportion that they more or less coincide with their natural dispositions. Hence, each individual selects the duty which best suits his inclinations, and seems almost to forget that any others are in existence. The Pharisees preserved a very decent exterior, and were strict observers of the literal part of the Law. Perfectly satisfied with their imaginary progress in holiness, they placidly reined on the pillow of self-righteousness, and felt not the hidden malignity of their nature. What they performed were undoubtedly duties ; but they were duties, which in *there* situation required no great degree of self-denial. The moment an awakened conscience forced them to acknowledge that exertions of a much higher nature were necessary to gain the favour of heaven, the mask of sanctified hypocrisy was dropped, their hatred to God

blazed out in its full fury, and a deliberate judicial murder of the discloser of such disagreeable truths was the result.

We are sometimes apt complacently to thank God, that we are not like the Pharisees ; but, would we candidly examine our own hearts, we might possibly find that they contain the very same evil disposition in embryo. To a man of an active temper, a life full of employment is the highest source of gratification. Hence, if he have received some religious impressions, he feels but little repugnance to diverting his activity into a different channel from what it flowed in before. The same *disposition* remains, though the object which engages his attention and rouses the vigour of his mind, be now no longer the same. In the discharge of *active* religious duties, he perceives not the enmity of a corrupt heart against God, because from mere physical reasons he feels no repugnance against them. But if he be called upon

to analyse the hidden cause of his actions, and to give up part of his time to serious meditation ; if he be required daily to deny himself, and no longer to participate in those vanities which are usually peculiarly gratifying to ardent and sanguine tempers : if such requisitions as these be made, then commences the struggle ; and we too frequently behold those, who are foremost in every active duty, shrink with disgust from the resignation of worldly pleasure.

On the other hand, men of indolent and phlegmatic dispositions would never perceive their enmity towards God, were Christianity a mere negative system of quietism. Persons of this description, who begin to feel the importance of religion, will hear with equal complacency a warm exhortation to the duties of the closet, and a vehement remonstrance against dissipation. They forthwith give themselves up to prayer and devout meditation ; they read the Scriptures daily ; and they steadily resolve

never more to frequent the haunts of vanity and folly. All this they perform without any difficulty ; and therefore conclude, that their inclinations are perfectly in unison with the will of God, and that they have arrived at a considerable degree of eminence in the school of Christianity. But what are their pretensions to superior piety, if they be closely scrutinized ? They diligently perform those duties, to which simply from their natural constitution they have no repugnance ; and resolutely deny themselves all those fashionable follies, for which they previously entertained the most profound indifference. In such a state of mind let a course of *active* duty be urged upon them, and they will be effectually convinced of their natural hatred to the Law of God. Men are very ready to obey, so far as obedience is not entirely inconsistent with their inclinations ; hence the opulent will never take offence at the clergyman who happens to preach a *concio ad populum* against theft, nor the populace at him who

censures the vices of their superiors.* But, if he faithfully tell *both* parties their faults ; if he force his reluctant congregation to take a survey of their inward corruptions ; and if he declare, that no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven unless a complete and radical change take place in his heart : he will find none satisfied with him but those, who are resolved to make the service of God the main business of their lives. In a similar manner, if he assure such of his flock as make a great outward profession of religion, that a vehement zeal for cer-

* I have somewhere seen a story of Doctor Johnson, which may serve not inappositely to exemplify this remark ; though I by no means think the Doctor's implied censure of his mother just. " I remember," said he to one of his friends, " when I was a child, that my mother, by way of spending a Sunday evening profitably, made me read to her a chapter from *The Whole Duty of Man* against stealing : the truth of the doctrine was undeniable, but I felt no inclination to be a thief"

tain particular doctrines, a stannch adherence to party, a never-ceasing eagerness to discuss theological topics, an intemperate thirst of hearing sermons, and a too exclusive partiality for favourite preachers, are no certain marks of grace ; if he solemnly warn them, that the *doers*, not the *hearers* of God's word, are treading the path which leads to heaven ; and if he remind them, that the *shibboleth* of a sect is by no means an evidence of real Christianity : it is far from improbable, that his plain-dealing will be very ill received. So long as he prophesies smooth things, and accommodates himself to the humour of his congregation, whatever that humour may be, just so long they will speak well of him ; but, *let him put forth his hand, and touch their bone and their flesh, and they will curse him to his face.**

* Job ii. 5.

What has been said is amply sufficient to prove, that the carnal mind is enmity with God. If any person still doubt it, let him but vigorously apply himself to those *allowed* duties which are most irksome to him, and he will quickly find an argument in his own breast, infinitely stronger than any that have been here adduced.*

2. Closely connected with the bitter *animosity* which the heart entertains against God (con-

* “ Quid aliud in mundo quam pugna adversus diabolum quotidie geritur; quam adversus jacula ejus et tela conflictationibus assiduus dimicatur? Cum avaritia nobis, cum impudicitia, cum ira, cum ambitione, congressio est: cum carnalibus vitiis, cum illecebris secularibus, assidua et molesta luctatio est. Obsessa mens hominis, et undique diaboli infestatione vallata, vix occurrit singulis, vix resistit. Si avaritia prostrata est, exsurgit libido: si libido compressa est, succedit ambitio: si ambitio contemta est, ira exasperat, inflat superbia, vinolentia invitat, invidia concordiam rumpit, amicitiam zelus abscindit.” Cyprian. de Mortal.

needed indeed with it in the way of cause and effect is its *extreme depravity*. Theological writers have not unfrequently been accused of exaggeration in treating of the depravity in question : but the conscience of every one, whose understanding has been enlightened with self-knowledge, will readily acquit them of the charge. “ Since the fall, the nature of man has been blind and corrupt ; his understanding darkened, and his affections polluted. Upon the face of the whole earth there is no man, Jew or Gentile, that understandeth and seeketh after God. The natural man, or man remaining in that state wherein the fall left him, is so far from being able to discover or know any religious truth, that he hates and flies from it when it is proposed to him : *he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*. Man is natural and earthly ; the things of God are spiritual and heavenly ; and these are contrary one to the other : therefore, as the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, so the wisdom

of God is foolishness with the world. In a word, the sense man is now possessed of, where God does not restrain it, is used for evil and not for good : his wisdom is earthly, sensual, devilish : it is the sagacity of a brute, animated by the malignity of an evil spirit.”*

3. In addition to its *enmity against God*, and its *utter depravity*, the human heart is likewise in a state of *insensibility and stupidity*. The conscience as the Apostle expresses it, is *past feeling, seared as with a hot iron*.† Hence reproofs and judgments may irritate, but can never merely by their own influence convert. This insensibility, though it may be *increased* by a habit of sinning, is yet itself originally *inherent* in the conscience : *at the first*, it is not so much *superinduced* upon it, as it *springs out* of it.

* Jones's *Cathol Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 14.

† Ephes. iv. 19. 1 Tim. iv. 2.

IV. Man being thus depraved in the *understanding*, the *will*, and the *affections*, it is almost superfluous to observe, that he must in consequence have lost all *power* of serving God. *Unable* to discover his will, *hating* it when it is discovered to him, and so *polluted* by sin that he is utterly unable to cleanse himself, how can he perform in his own strength any acceptable service? He may indeed, in the pride of his high speculations, imagine himself *to be rich, and to have need of nothing*; but the word of God will inform him, that he is *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.^{*} Even those actions of the natural man, which bear the semblance of good; the patriotism of a Regulus, and the morality of a Socrates; even they are but splendid sins:† for, as we are rightly taught by the Church,

^{*} Revel. iii. 17.

† See Bp. Beveridge's Exposition of the Articles Art. xiii.

“ Works, done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ :—yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, *we doubt not* but they have the nature of sin.”* The reason of this is obvious : a polluted heart can no more bring forth a good action, than a polluted fountain can emit pure water ; but all our hearts are by nature impure : consequently all our actions before the reception of divine grace must be impure also, and as such cannot be pleasing unto God.

In this miserable condition is every man born. Fallen from his high estate, and sunk in the deep sleep of presumptuous wickedness, he refuses to *listen to the voice of any human charm-*

* Art. xiii. See also Bp. Hopkins's Works, p. 525. and Bp. Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Art. viii.

er, charm he ever so wisely. God alone is able to create a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within him; for creation is an attribute belonging solely to the Deity. Man must be brought back to the image of his Maker, that image which was lost by the fall of Adam; or he must for ever remain excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

.....From the mercy-seat above
 Prevenient grace descending must remove
 The stony from his heart, and make new flesh
 Regenerate grow instead

CHAPTER II.

The illumination of the understanding through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the first work of grace in the human soul.

WHEN the Almighty created man, he foresaw all the fatal consequences which would result from his violation of the divine commandment. Though justice required the punishment of the transgressors, yet mercy provided a wonderful remedy, by virtue of which Adam and all his posterity might have the means of escaping eternal perdition. The fulness of time being come, the only begotten of the Father; “God of God, Light of Light,

very God of very God;" the Lamb virtually and typically slain from the foundation of the world; this glorious personage took our nature upon him, and was *made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted*. After spending a life of unwearied benevolence and heavenly purity, honouring the Law more highly by his perfect observance of it than it was ever dishonoured by the transgressions of the whole race of man, our Lord closed his ministerial labours by offering himself up, a voluntary self-devoted sacrifice, for the sins of the world. The benefits of his death and passion extended as widely as the baneful effects of the fall had done;* and we are repeatedly told by the inspired writers, that he suffered for the sins of *all* men.† *None* are excluded from being partakers of these blessings. *Every* contrite sinner, *every* soul that wishes for salvation, is freely invited to

* 1 Corin. xv. 22.

† Heb. ii. 9. Coloss. i. 20. 1 Tim. ii. 4. 6.

approach to the throne of mercy, assured of a welcome reception through the all-sufficient merits of the Redeemer. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy milk and wine without money and without price!**

But, although the redemption of mankind be thus unlimited and universal, and although God willeth not the death of any sinner, but rather that all should turn unto him and repent; yet, by reason of the obstinate folly of the wicked, the gracious purposes of the Almighty fail to produce universal salvation. *All day long, saith the Lord, have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.† Enter ye in, saith our Saviour, at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction,*

* Isaiah lv. 1.

† Rom. x. 21.

*and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**

Hence it is evident, that many unhappy persons, whom the god of this world hath blinded, will either expressly reject, or carelessly neglect to avail themselves of, the benefits of Christ's death and passion. All those who are infatuated with the pride of infidelity, and madly defy the living God, exclude themselves with a high hand from the pale of the church ; and all those, who, like the devils, believe and tremble ; who acknowledge the divine authority of the Gospel, but are strangers to its influence ; who live, to use the emphatic words of Scripture, *without God in the world*, dead in tresspasses and sins ; all these, if there be any truth in the plain declarations of our Lord and his Apostles, have no lot nor portion in the Son of God.

How happens it then, that some receive the word with joy, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance ; while others either suddenly reject it, or remain alike uninfluenced by its threats and its promises ? *No man, saith our blessed Lord, can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.** But in what manner doth the Father draw mankind unto himself, in order that they may not perish, but receive everlasting life ? The Apostle informs us, that *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.†*

It is therefore the peculiar office of the third person of the Trinity to bring us unto Christ, and to induce us to accept the pardon which is freely offered unto all. Here we see, that none can come unto Christ without being drawn by the gracious influence of the Spirit.

* John vi. 44.

† 1 Corin. xii. 3.

But many resist that influence to their own destruction : in a manner compelling God to declare, that *his Spirit shall not always strive with man* ;* and forcing the merciful Saviour himself to complain, *ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.*† Here we learn the true reason, why so many perish in their sins : they *will not* accept the salvation, which is offered to them in common with all mankind. God the Spirit draweth them indeed : but they obstinately refuse to follow him.‡

* Gen. vi. 3.

† John v. 40.

‡ I have endeavoured to state this difficult point in that manner, which to *myself*, at least, appears the most agreeable to Scripture. With the Calvinistic view of the subject I am by no means satisfied : but the Pelagian view of it is yet more exceptionable.

It is certain, that the free-will (that is, of course the *moral*, not the *natural*, free-will) which Adam possessed in his state of purity, was *lost*, at the fall, when he and all his posterity became inclined to evil ; hence, as we are instructed by the Church, “ the condition of man after

A considerable degree of prudence and caution is necessary in treating of the operations

the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God:" nevertheless it is no-where asserted in Scripture, that freedom of will is not equally *restored* unto *all* men by the preaching of the gospel. Every expostulation of God with the wicked *necessarily* supposes, that he freely gives them an *opportunity* of repentance; and that their eternal condemnation is the result, not of an *arbitrary decree*, but of their *deliberately choosing* evil rather than good, and their *obstinately refusing* the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which is equally offered unto *all* men.

I am aware, that in reply a Calvinist will argue; "If *all* have free-will equally given to them by the Spirit, if *all* are equally drawn by the Father, *all* must equally come unto Christ."

This, however, by no means follows, as we may sufficiently learn from the fall of our first parent. Adam possessed free-will by nature; and, without having the slightest bias to evil, was strongly drawn or inclined by the Spirit of God to that which is good: yet Adam fell. Why then may not those, to whom the free-will lost by the transgression of Adam has been restored on the offer

of the Holy Ghost, and the two extremes of enthusiasm and profaneness should be equally avoided.

of pardon by the Gospel, fall likewise? Persons, placed under such circumstances, and urged by the secret influence of the Holy Ghost to flee from the wrath to come, can scarcely be thought *more* highly favoured than Adam was previous to his transgression: it is not very easy therefore to say, why they may not abuse free-will *when recovered*, just as much as Adam did *when possessed of it ab origine*; and why they may not neglect to use *imparted strength*, just as much as Adam did *the strength which he received at his creation*. If Adam had been drawn to a due performance of his duty by an *irresistible* impulse of the Spirit, it is manifest that he never *could* have fallen: I am not aware that we are warranted by Scripture to suppose, that the Holy Ghost acts upon *our* wills in any different manner from what he did upon *Adam's*. It is *one* thing to believe, that no man can come unto Christ unless he be drawn by the Father through the agency of the Spirit; and quite *another* to maintain, that every person, who is thus drawn, must, *necessarily* and *inevitably* obey that impulse. The denial of the first of these propositions constitutes the heresy of the Pelagians; the asserting of the second the error of the Calvinists. Be-

Persons of a sanguine temperament have not unfrequently been so far deluded by a mischievous fanaticism, as to mistake the workings of a heated imagination for the immediate dictates of heaven. Hence they have been sometimes led to undervalue even the sacred word of God, and to fancy that they are actually taught by inspiration without making any use of the means which the Almighty has been pleased to appoint. The consequence of such crude and unscriptural notions is sufficiently evident: the unhappy victims of this fatal delusion fall from one absurdity into another, the sport of every wind of doctrine, and the pity of all sober-minded Chris-

cause Scripture appeals to us as free and reasonable beings, the former very rashly suppose, that we stand in no need of divine grace; because Scripture declares, that of ourselves we can neither will nor do that which is good, the latter too hastily conclude, that the influence of the Spirit is absolutely irresistible. But I desist from pressing the matter any further: the object of the present treatise is not controversy.

tians. The error, to which I allude, consists in mistaking the *extraordinary* for the *ordinary* operations of the Spirit. We are not in the present day to expect any *new* revelations : that point has been sufficiently decided by St. Paul. *Though we or an angel from heaven, says he, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.** The office of the Holy Ghost is not to reveal any *additional* doctrines to us ; but to enable us to *understand spiritually* those which have been *already* revealed. Accordingly, the Bereans are commended as being more noble than the Thessalonians, not only because they readily received the word, but because they likewise *searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.†* God's Holy Spirit doubtless both prevented and seconded their pious endeavours, illuminating their minds, and filling them with all heavenly wisdom ; for we

* Galat. i. 8.

† Acts xvii. 11.

are informed, that many of them believed : but at the same time it is signified to us, that the *external* cause was their diligent attention to the Scriptures.* In a similar manner, although the Church directs her children to pray unto God for his inspiration,† it is only that they may be enabled to think those things that be good, and that their hearts may be cleansed from all impurity ; not that they may become prophets or apostles. Long has the *extraordinary* influence of the Spirit ceased, and we are authorised by our blessed Lord himself to consider all pretensions to it in these latter days as the marks whereby we may assuredly detect

* “ They — searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so ; *therefore* many of them believed.” Acts xvii. 11, 12.

† Collects for the 5th Sun. after East. and Communion Service.

impostors.* One of the main artifices of Satan is to propagate error by issuing, as it were, base counterfeits of those scriptural doctrines which have received the stamp of God's own authority. As he persuades some to sin in order that grace may abound, miscalling the impure speculations of Antinomianism *justification by faith*; so he bewilders others in the mazes of enthusiasm, puffing them up with vain conceits, and distracting the peace of the Church, under the pretence that the wild reveries of a mad fanatic are the immediate inspiration of heaven.

Persons of an opposite description to those, whose imagination outruns their judgment, terrified and disgusted with the perversion of the scriptural doctrine of *divine influence*, have too hastily plunged into the other extreme; and,

* Matt. xxiv. 11. 23, 24, 25, 26.

though perhaps they may not absolutely have denied the existence of the Holy Ghost, yet they scarcely allow him any share in the great work of our conversion. Our Lord indeed compares the operations of the Spirit to the wind, and we can no more discern the one than the other: nevertheless, if we have received the Holy Ghost, our souls must be as sensible of his influence by its beneficial effects, as our bodies are of the impulse of the air when in motion. Unless this be allowed, it is not very easy to say *what* we are to understand by such a comparison. When a total change takes place in a man's soul, a change so great that it is called in Scripture *a passage from darkness into light, from extinction to animation*,* it is utterly impossible that it should not be perceived.† This

* 1 John ii. 8. Ephes. i. 18. Ibid. ii. 1. 5.

† “There must be a revolution of *principle*: the visible conduct will follow the change; but there must be a rev.

change consists in an illumination of the understanding, a restoration of the freedom of the will, and a regulation of the affections.

The first thing necessary towards our becoming children of God is the illumination of the

olution *within*. A change so entire, so deep, so important, as this, I do allow to be a conversion ; and no one, who is in the situation above described, can be saved without undergoing it ; and he must necessarily both be sensible of it at the time, and remember it all his life afterwards. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgot. A man might as easily forget his escape from a shipwreck. Whether it was sudden, or whether it was gradual, if it was effected (and the fruits of it will prove that,) it was a true conversion : and every such person may justly both believe and say it himself, that he was converted at a particular assignable time. It may not be necessary to speak of his conversion, but he will always think of it with unbounded thankfulness to the giver of all grace " Paley's Sermons, Sermon vii

understanding. The Holy Ghost must shine into the dark recesses of our hearts and grant us a spiritual discernment, or the word of God will for ever remain a sealed book. We may indeed comprehend the literal and grammatical construction of the sentences, but we shall derive no more saving knowledge from it than the Jews did from the law when they crucified the Lord of life. The mere exertions of unassisted reason can never convey to our minds any knowledge of the things of God, because they must be spiritually discerned. Much has already been said upon this subject, when the spiritual deficiency of our understandings was considered. We all know that they are not defective in comprehending the bare letter of Scripture any more than that of Homer or Virgil; in what then are they defective, unless it be in *spiritual* discernment? This will alone account for the language of St. Paul, when he assures the Ephesians, that he ceases not to offer up his prayers, *that the God of our Lord*

Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him ; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened ; that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. The Ephesians doubtless possessed the faculty of common discernment ; and yet the same Apostle prays that they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might*

* In this passage, according to the usual manner of the sacred writers, spiritual things are exhibited to our comprehension by their corresponding natural objects ; and the illumination of the Holy Spirit is compared to opening the eyes of the blind.

*be filled with the fulness of God.** Hence it appears that the Ephesians might read the Scripture without that comprehension of it, which the Apostle prays for on their behalf.†

* Ephes. iii. 18.

† Ευχου δε σοι προ παντων φωτος ανοιχθηναι πυλας· ου γαρ συνοπτα ουδε συννοητα πατιν εστιν. ει μη τω Θεω δω συνιεναι και ο Χριστος αυτου. Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 173.

“The first creature of God in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his spirit. First he breathed light upon the face of the matter of chaos; then he breathed light upon the face of man; and still breaketh and inspireth light into the face of his chosen.” Lord Bacon’s Essay on Truth.

“Absurd is the doctrine of the Socinians and some others, that *unregenerate men, by a mere natural perception, without any divine superinfused light* (they are the words of Episcopius, and they are wicked words) *may understand*

From these remarks it is sufficiently evident, that, although Christ died for the sins of the

the whole law, even all things requisite unto faith and godliness; foolishly confounding and impiously deriding the spiritual and divine sense of the Holy Scriptures with the grammatical construction. Against this we shall need use no other argument than a plain syllogism compounded out of the words of Scripture : *Darkness doth not comprehend light*, (John i. 5. ;) *Unregenerate men are darkness*, (Ephes. v. 8. iv. 17, 18. Acts xxvi. 18. 2 Pet. i. 9.) *yea, held under the power of darkness*, (Col. i. 13.) and *The word of God is light*, (Psalm cxix. 105. 2 Cor. iv. 4.) therefore *unregenerate men cannot understand the word in that spiritual compass which it carries*.—Natural men have their principles vitiated, their faculties bound, that they cannot understand spiritual things. till God have, as it were, implanted a new understanding in them, framed the heart to attend, and set it at liberty to see the glory of God with open face. Though the veil do not keep out grammatical construction, yet it blindeth the heart against the spiritual light and beauty of the word.” Bishop Reynolds’s Works, p. 44.

whole world, yet none will ever truly acknowledge him as their Lord except by the influence and operation of the blessed Spirit. Before he *opens their eyes to see wonderful things out of God's Law*, they are as totally devoid of all spiritual understanding, as a blind man is of the faculty of discerning material objects. These objects exist indeed ; but, from the de-

“ Spiritus Paracletus illum longe docet melius, quam universi libri : ut absolutius intelligat scripturam, quam explanari illi queat.” Luther. Enarrat. Fol. 275. A.

“ Secundus gradus est donatio spiritus sancti, qui novam lucem in mente, et novos motus in voluntate et corde, accendit ; gubernat nos ; et inchoat in nobis vitam æternam.” Melanc. Loc. Theol. p. 731. See also King Edward's Catechism in Bp. Randolph's Enchiridion, vol. i. p. 41.—Noel's Catechism, Ibid. vol. ii. p. 132.—Bp. Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Art. viii.—Bp. Wilkins on Prayer, chap. xvii.—Bp. Reynold's Works, p. 305. 463.—Dr. Barrow's Works, vol. iii. p. 529, 530, 531.—Jones's Essay on Man, chap. iii.

iciency of his organs of vision, they are unable to make any impression upon his mind.

Hence, as I have already observed, the first step, which the Holy Spirit takes in the conversion of a sinner, is to open the eyes of his understanding.* While men remain in a state of carnal security, the sound of God's word passes by them as little regarded as the wind. They have no conception of the spirituality of the Law nor of the purity of God. Provided only a decent exterior be preserved and the penal statutes of the land be unviolated, they imagine that all is perfectly safe, and that it

* "The first work, which God puts forth upon the soul, in order to its conversion, is, to raise up a spiritual light within it, to clear up its apprehensions about spiritual matters, so as to enable the soul to look upon God as the chiefest good, and the enjoyment of him as the greatest bliss." Bp. Beveridge's *Private Thoughts*, Art. viii.

would be equally absurd and uncharitable to doubt of the certainty of their salvation. In the mean time they forget that God is a searcher of the heart, that he requires truth in the inward parts, and that he is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity. Their boasted morality is for the most part merely negative : it is rather an absence of the overt acts of sin, than a presence of real holiness. Though they duly make a weekly acknowledgment of their sinfulness in strict conformity with the liturgy of the Church ; yet they repeat the confession rather as words of course, than as feeling the truth of it from bitter experience : and, though they punctually receive the sacrament “ at the least three times in the year,” and avow that “ the remembrance of their misdoings is grievous unto them and the burden of them intolerable ;” yet, notwithstanding the strength of the language which they adopt, it is much to be questioned whether they be really sensible of the vast weight of sin. If pressed closely

upon this subject, they invariably deny that depth of corruption, that mystery of iniquity, by which every faculty of the human soul, every thought and word and deed of the very best man upon earth, is more or less polluted and unclean. They will probably acknowledge venial errors, pardonable frailties, and trifling lapses; but the doctrine, that man is very far gone from original righteousness, that of his own nature he is inclined to evil, that he deserveth God's wrath and damnation, and that he is by nature a child of wrath, is rejected by them with all the augry feelings of a proud indignation.*

It is no uncommon thing in the present day to hear various orthodox doctrines stigmatized as being *Calvinistic*, when in truth they are no more *peculiar* to Calvinism than to any other doctrinal system. Such has been the fate of the tenet of *original sin*. They, who deny it, find it much more convenient to term those, who maintain it, *Calvinists*, than to abide by the plain and explicit decision

From this utter ignorance of their own corruption, they will usually be found strongly in-

of the Church in her 9th Article. All Calvinists *do* indeed hold it; but it does not therefore follow, that all, who hold it, are *Calvinists*, any more than that all Trinitarians are *Papists*. “Our Articles,” says Bishop Horsley, “affirm certain things, which we hold in common with the Calvinists: so they affirm certain things, which we hold in common with the Lutherans; and some things, which we hold in common with the Romanists. It cannot well be otherwise; for, as there are certain principles which are common to all Protestants, so the essential articles of faith are common to all Christians.” Horsley’s Tracts, p. 398. Since this was written, his Lordship has very judiciously advised those, who are eager to signalize their prowess against the doctrinal system of the Genevan reformer, first to learn what Calvinism is *exclusively*; lest haply, instead of assailing *certain adventurous peculiarities*, they direct their attacks against *our common Christianity itself*.

Nec, pueri, ne tanta animis assuescite bella :

Neu patriæ validas in viscera vertite vires.

clined to the dangerous delusion of self-justification. Their notion is, that although they be frail creatures, yet they humbly trust they are not *quite* so bad as some persons would represent them. They doubt not, but that their works will justify them as far as they go ; that the merits of the Redeemer will make up all deficiencies ; and that the infinite mercy of God will throw a veil over their casual imperfections. Upon the whole, they are inclined to hope that their good deeds far outweigh their occasional errors ; and, to use the language of the poet, that they are men “more sinned against than sinning :” at any rate, that their hearty repentance, and the pains and troubles which they encounter here, will make ample atonement for all their transgressions. Thus, while they acknowledge in words the necessity of a Saviour, they in reality depend much more upon their own imaginary righteousness than upon the merits of Christ.

The whole of this arises from spiritual blindness ; for if they really *understood* the purport of the Law, they would never dream that their own miserable performances could either partially or universally *merit* the favour of God. Like the infatuated Jews in the days of our Lord, they have the Scriptures in their hands, and perhaps occasionally peruse them ; but they are totally unconseious that they are reading their own condemnation. They slumber over the sacred page, and perceive not that their curse is there recorded. *Cursed is every one, that abideth not in all the things of this Law.* Their eyes are closed, so that they are unable to perceive their numerous violations of it, in thought, word, and deed. Hence the Law is to them a dead letter ; and they remain in a state of utter ignorance of its spiritual design.

“ We and our whole nature,” says the illustrious Luther, “ are entirely blind ; nor is our reason more ignorant of any thing, than of the

requisitions of God's Law. Christ conferred a double benefit upon the Scribes and Pharisees : he first took away their blindness, by showing them what the Law is ; and afterwards taught them, how far the perfect observance of it exceeds their abilities. He took away their blindness by informing them that the Law is love ; which doctrine bare reason is equally incapable of receiving at present, as the Jews were formerly. For, if reason could have comprehended it, the Pharisees and the Lawyers, who at that time were the best and wisest among the people, would doubtless have comprehended it. But they imagined that the whole matter consisted in performing the external works of the Law ; and that it was of little moment, whether they were done voluntarily or involuntarily. Meanwhile their internal blindness, their avarice, and their darkened heart, passed without observation ; and they fancied that they were accurately discharging their duty. But no one is able to keep the Law,

unless he be totally renewed. Be assured therefore of this, that mere reason can never either understand or fulfil the Law, even though it may be acquainted with what the Law contains. When do you do unto others, as you would they should do unto you? Who ever heartily loved his enemy? Who ever died voluntarily? Who will undergo with readiness contumely and disgrace? Produce me only a single man, who willingly submits to the ignominy of a blasted character, or to the inconveniences of poverty. Nature and human reason abhor and shun such trials; and will always, if possible, avoid them. Nor will human nature ever fulfil those things, which God requires in the Law; namely, that we should make a voluntary surrender of our will to his will; that we should renounce our intellect, our inclinations, our faculties, and our powers, so completely, as to be able to say, with a hearty assent, *Thy will be done*. So far from this, you will never find a man, who loves God and his neighbour

equally with himself.—It is mere hypocrisy to say, *I do love God, he is my Father.* So long indeed as he refrains from crossing our inclinations, we can readily use such language ; but, in the day of trouble and calamity, we neither regard him as God, nor as our Father. Widely different from these are the sentiments of him who sincerely loves God. *I am thy creature, O Lord, do with me as it seemeth best to thy good pleasure. If it please thee, that I should die this very hour, or be plunged into the midst of evils, I cheerfully submit. My life, my reputation, my property, my all, I hold as nothing, when placed in competition with thy will. But what mortal man can you find, who will always hold such language as this with sincerity?—The Law requires that nothing should be even disagreeable to you, which is agreeable to God ; that you should willingly observe all his precepts and all his prohibitions, throughout the whole of your life and conversation. But there exists not the man who stands uncondemned*

for his breach of that Law, which God requires to be observed. Such is the trouble and affliction, in which we are involved; nor are we in the least able to extricate ourselves. This then is the first knowledge of the Law; to know that it is impossible for human strength to observe it, God requires the heart; and, unless our works be done from the heart, they are of no value in his sight. Works indeed you may do in outward appearance; but God is not satisfied with them, unless they spring from the soul and from love: which can never be the case, unless a man be born again of the spirit. Wherefore the end of the Law is to bring us to acknowledge our infirmity, insomuch that of ourselves we are not able to perform even the letter of the Law. As soon as you are convinced of this, the Law has done its duty. Hence St. Paul asserts that *by the Law is the knowledge of sin.*”*

* Luther. Enarrat. Fol. 335. C.

Let persons of the class which I have been describing try their hearts, with fidelity and sincerity, by this admirable passage. Let them see, whether they love God as they ought to do ; whether they keep his statutes and his ordinances in the manner which he has prescribed ; whether they find their whole souls so totally devoted to his service, as to exclude every vain thought and every foolish wish ; whether their life be spent in an unceasing round of duties, both negative and positive. All this is *required* by the Law without any mitigation and abatement. Hence, to those, who seek to be *justified* by their works it is the savour of death unto death : for they, who would be *justified* by the Law, must *keep* the Law. Hence also it is absolutely necessary, that the Holy Spirit should open the eyes of their understanding, in order that they may discern the purity of the Law, and the extent of their danger. Till his gracious influences pervade their hearts, every spiritual sense is

benumbed by ignorance and steeped in error. They see not the corruption, which is the inheritance of all the children of Adam; even the word of God cannot persuade them of the reality of its existence. All, who attempt to convince them of it, are considered only in the light of gloomy hypochondriacs, ever brooding over imaginary evils. Their words appear to them as idle tales, which they cannot comprehend and will not believe. Scripture alone can account for so singular a difference between these two classes of men. The one is possessed of a sense, of which the other is destitute. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** This spiritual discernment is the special gift of the Holy Ghost. It is he, who causes the proud sinner to see clearly the requisitions of the Law, and

* 1 Corinth. ii. 14.

his own utter inability to perform them. It is he, who destroys that comfortable self-sufficiency, that hollow security, in which the soul had long reposed; and who, armed with all the thunder of Sinai, rouses the sleeping conscience, and arrests the unwilling attention. At the bar of such a judge every plea is rejected, and the stubborn reluctant sinner is compelled to plead guilty. He will now thoroughly comprehend the meaning of St. Paul's confession: *I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead. For I was alive without the Law once: but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me; and by it slew me. Wherefore the Law is*

*holy ; and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me ? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin.**

So long as St. Paul remained in his unconverted state, he was totally unconscious of the spirituality of the Law, and perceived not that it contained the sense of his condemnation. While he was thus placed *without the real Law*, he seemed to himself alive ; and entertained not the slightest doubt of his having merited salvation, being, as he elsewhere expresses himself, *touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless.*† But, as soon as the Holy Spirit opened his eyes, and when

* Rom vii. 7.

† Phill. iii. 6.

the commandment came, attended with a clear conviction of his numerous breaches of it, and his utter inability to keep it; sin revived, and he evidently saw that he lay under sentence of death. He was compelled indeed to acknowledge the Law to be holy, and just, and good; but this very excellence served only to increase his condemnation. Though the commandment was ordained to life, he found it to be unto death; a consequence which arose, not from the imperfection of the Law, but from the depravity of his own nature. The Holy Ghost having enabled him to see the spirituality of the Law, he then for the first time perceived that he was carnal, sold under sin. And so deep was the impression which this conviction made upon his mind, that it forced him to exclaim in a kind of agony: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? He was now brought into a proper frame of mind to receive the Gospel of Christ. He saw his own manifold corrup-

tions and the extreme sinfulness of his sin ; he perceived that he was unable of himself to help himself, and that his very best deeds could not stand the scrutiny of him, who *chargeth even his angels with folly*. This conviction forced him to look unto Christ for salvation, and to submit himself to the righteousness of God. The Gospel was now to him a savour of life unto life ; he renounced all dependence on his own goodness, and humbly thanked God for the pardon held out to him *through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

Such were the varying emotions of St. Paul's heart, while the great work of illumination was going on within him ; and such (for human nature is the same in all ages,) must be the convictions of every one, whom the Holy Spirit condescends to instruct. We are not indeed to imagine that the sincerity of a man's conversion is to be estimated by the *strength* of his feelings. The converted profligate will natu-

rally be more deeply sensible of those stings, which a consciousness of the violated Law inflicts upon the soul, than the decent moral man, who begins to suspect the safety of relying upon his own righteousness: and the warmer a man's natural feelings are, the stronger will be his terror when labouring under a sense of guilt; for Christianity does not so much eradicate the passions, as enlist them into her service. But men of all temperaments *must* be thoroughly convinced of their own exceeding vileness, whatever their feelings may be upon the occasion, or their understandings will never be sufficiently enlightened to perceive the necessity of a mediator. They may indeed, previous to this conviction, acknowledge the want of a Saviour with their lips, and own in general terms that their lives are not perfectly free from sin: but, with respect to the hopes which they entertain of their salvation, they will ever be found to place their principal dependence on the blamelessness of their lives, their

benevolence towards their fellow-creatures, and (in their more thoughtful hours) on some vague notions of God's mercy.

Observe the workings of a really humbled mind in the confession of Bp. Beveridge. "If," says he, "there be not a bitter root in my heart, whence proceeds so much bitter fruit in my life and conversation? Alas! I can neither set my head nor heart about any thing, but I still show myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring. Nay, I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart, by poisoning my *common* actions, but even my most *religious* performances also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears

want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. 'Thus, not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam: Inasmuch, that whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin.'*

When a person is once brought into this state of mind, he will then, and not till then, begin to think seriously of another world. He will perceive himself to be a miserable, helpless, undone sinner, justly obnoxious to the wrath of God. Instead of attempting to excuse and palliate his depravity, he will anticipate the sentence of his judge, and be the first to pronounce condemnation upon himself. He will

* Priv thoughts, Art. iv

see the impossibility of cleansing his impurity, and the vanity of expecting to purchase salvation by any inherent righteousness of his own. *It costs more to redeem his soul, so that he must let that alone for ever.* When he considers his past life, he will be astonished at his former ignorance and insensibility. He will seem to himself like one roused from a deep sleep, in which every faculty of his soul had been completely locked up; but he will awake only to perceive himself destitute, bare, and miserable.

..... So rose the Danite strong,
 Herculean Sampson from the harlot lap
 Of Philistean Dalilah, and wak'd,
 Shorn of his strength

He will now, with the astonished jailor, be ready to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Driven from every strong-hold of vanity and presumption, he will leave the absurdly proud

notion of self-justification to the blind Socinian and arrogant Pelagian. However he may once have indulged in the fantastic airy dream of his own excellence and dignity, he will now clearly perceive, that there is no hope, no comfort, no solid expectation of future happiness, but in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III.



*A description of two different Classes of Men,
whose understandings are enlightened, while
their hearts remain unaffected.*

Two very different classes of men frequently attain to a considerable, I had almost said an equal, degree of spiritual knowledge with respect to the sinfulness of sin and the requisitions of the divine Law. They are both deeply convinced of the depravity of the human heart. They are both conscious of their manifold aberrations and deficiencies in practice. They

both feel the load of their iniquity to be grievous and intolerable. Neither of these classes attempts to justify itself. Each is forced by conscience to cry out *Unclean, unclean*. Each is secretly constrained to acknowledge the righteousness of God. Thus far the parallel holds good between them, but here it terminates; and a striking difference commences, which will best be discerned by a separate delineation of the character of each.

I. The anguish, which persons of the first description feel, arises *merely* from a consciousness of guilt and from a dread of threatened punishment. In *their* case there is no spiritual loathing of the blackness of sin, no horror of it springing from the knowledge of its hatefulness to God, no *indignation*, no *vehement desire*, no *zeal*, no *revenge*.* The tempest in *their* hearts is conjured up solely by terror, unmixed

* 2 Cor. vii. 11.

terror. They feel nothing of filial sorrow at having offended their heavenly Father; they feel no compunction at having counted the blood of atonement an unholy thing; they feel no grief at having resisted the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. Sin still reigns triumphant in their hearts; and they inwardly abhor that Law, which strikes at the very existence of their idol. Were all fears of future punishment removed, and were they assured beyond a possibility of doubt, that mere annihilation would hereafter be their portion; these joyful tidings would wipe away all tears from their eyes, and remove every uneasy thought from their heart. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* They would return with avidity to their former vicious indulgences, regardless, whether their conduct was pleasing or displeasing to the Most High. It is not *sin* that they hate, but *the wages of sin*; it is not *God* that they love, but *their own safety*.

In vain is the wonderful goodness and long suffering of the Lord held up before the eyes of their understanding. The numberless blessings which they enjoy, the numberless evils from which they are exempt, the patience with which God has endured their perverseness, the opportunities which he has given them of repentance, the tender loving kindness with which he condescendingly solicits (as it were) a reconciliation with them ; like Gallio, they *care for none of these things*. In vain for them doth the whole creation proclaim the beneficence of the great Creator. In vain for them doth he cause the sun to shine, and the seasons to revolve in grateful vicissitude. In vain for them doth he, by the powerful machinery of nature, *send the springs into the rivers, which run among the hills*. In vain for them, by the united operation of various causes, doth he *bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him a cheerful countenance,*

and bread to strengthen man's heart. They will riot in these blessings even to satiety ; the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.†*

The mysterious act of mercy displayed in man's redemption may be described to them, but it excites no feeling of gratitude in their souls. The blameless life, the wonderful love, the bitter sufferings, and the lingering death, of the Son of God are acknowledged in words indeed, but fail to touch their hearts. Though salvation be freely offered to them, though the mild voice of the Redeemer calls upon all who thirst to drink of the water of everlasting life ; they angrily dash the proffered cup from their lips, and hate that mode of salvation which re-

* Psalm civ. 10.

† Isaiah v. 12.

quires the dereliction of sin. In short, their understandings are convinced, but their hearts remain untouched. They see the danger of sin, but they love it and cleave to it ; they perceive the necessity of a life of holiness but they detest and abhor it. Like the devils, they believe and tremble ; but, like them also, they fight indignantly against the Lord and against his Christ. *Even the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but they are dead to every sense of gratitude ; they consider God in the light of a tyrant, who seeks to deprive them of their dearest enjoyments.*

“ The power of the word,” says Bp. Reynolds, “ towards wicked men is seen in affrighting of them ; there is a spirit of bondage, and a savour of death, as well as a spirit of life and liberty, which goeth along with the word. Guilt is an inseparable consequent of sin ; and fear, of the manifestation of guilt. If the heart be once convinced of this, it will pre-

sently faint, and tremble, even at the shaking of a leaf, at the wagging of a man's own conscience; how much more at the voice of the Lord, which shaketh mountains and maketh the strong foundations of the earth to tremble? —It is not for want of strength in the word, or because there is stoutness in the hearts of men to stand out against it, that all the wicked of the world do not tremble at it, but merely their ignorance of the power and evidence thereof. The devils are stronger and more stubborn creatures than any man can be; yet, because of their full illumination and that invincible conviction of their consciences from the power of the word, they believe and tremble at it.—The power of the ingrafted word towards wicked men is seen even in the rage and madness which it excites in them. It is a sign, that a man hath to do with a strong enemy, when he buckleth on all his harness, and calleth together all his strength for opposition.—The most calm and devout hypocrites in the world

have by the power of this word been put out of their demure temper, and mightily transported with outrage and bitterness against the majesty thereof: one time filled with wrath; another time filled with madness; another time filled with envy and indignation; another time filled with contradiction and blasphemy; another time cut to the heart, and, like reprobates in hell, gnashing with their teeth. Such a searching power and such an extreme contrariety there is in the Gospel to the lusts of men, that if it do not subdue, it will wonderfully swell them up, till it distemper even the grave prudent men of the world with those brutish and uneomely affections of rage and fury, and drive disputes from their arguments unto stones. Sin cannot endure to be disquieted, much less to be shut in and encompassed with the curses of God's word. Therefore, as a hunted beast, in an extremity of distress, will turn back, and put to its utmost strength to be revenged on the pursuers and to save its

life; so wicked men, to save their lusts, will let out all their rage, and open all their sluices of pride and malice to withstand that holy truth, which doth so closely pursue them.*—Till men can be persuaded to lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, they will never receive the ingrafted word with meekness. For till then it is a binding word, which sealeth their guilt and condemnation upon them.”†

Perhaps no state of mind is more deplorable than that in which an enlightened understanding is united to an unconverted heart. It is a state totally devoid of peace and comfort, full of terror and *a fearful looking out-for of judg-*

* Το μεν καταγελασθηναι, ισως ουδεν πραγμα^{τι} Αθηναιοις γαρ τοι, ως εμοι δοκει, ου σφοδρα μελει, αν τινα δεινον οιωνται ειναι, μη μεντοι διδασκαλικον της αυτου σοφιας· ον δ' αν και αλλους οιωνται ποιειν τοιουτους, θυμουνται. Plat. Euthyphron. § 3.

† Bp. Reynold's Works, p. 365, 366, 367

ment and fiery indignation. The eyes of the mind are opened, so as to discern clearly that he is not a Christian who is one outwardly. The awakened conscience is tremblingly alive to every touch. It perceives the necessity of repentance ; and it acknowledges the obligation laid upon all true believers to take up their cross and follow Christ. But the will and the affections are wanting ; a secret hatred and reluctance reigns in the heart ; and the whole man loathes the burden which he conceives to be imposed upon him. Meanwhile a person of this description is deeply convinced, that, with his present temper and disposition, it is utterly impossible for him to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He knows that he labours under a *natural* unfitness for it, and that he could find no happiness even in the presence of God himself, unless a complete change should previously take place in his heart. This awful truth is evident, beyond a possibility of contradiction, to the man whose understanding has been so far

enlightened as to comprehend the requisitions of the Law and the nature of holiness ; but, his heart being at the same time totally unaffected and unaltered, he cannot conceive what pleasure there can be in a perpetual communion with God and in the purely spiritual joys of heaven. Hence arises his misery : he knows that he is unfit for heaven, and he shudders at the thoughts of hell. Gladly would he escape into some middle place of abode, were any such in existence, equally undisturbed by the presence of God and the torments of the damned. His future destiny perpetually haunts his imagination : and he flies from himself to seek relief in the midst of company and dissipation. For a time, he probably succeeds : for a time, he contrives to silence his conscience. The ever-varying pageant of vain amusements gradually banishes the recollection of those deep impressions which he had formerly received ; and he once more feels something at least of the pleasures of this world. But, if ever the strings of

conscience happen to be again touched, he relapses into all his former misery ; a misery, moreover, now too frequently mixed with a sort of hellish rage and malice against his monitor. Perhaps the Gospel is never sincerely explained and enforced, without either effecting a change in the heart, or exciting a spirit of bitter animosity and determined opposition. Men cannot bear to have their false tranquillity broken in upon ; they cannot bear to have the truth faithfully set before them ; they cannot bear to have the carnal security of their sinful pleasures disturbed. Provided these points be not touched upon, they will listen with the utmost complacency to an eulogy on the beauty of virtue and the dignity of human nature : but, the moment they are compelled to look within themselves, their patience fails them, and they are sometimes altogether unable even to *conceal* their indignation.

II. The second class, which I purposed to describe, is composed of persons of a character

radically different from that of the former. These see their duty to its full extent ; they thoroughly comprehend the spirituality of the Law ; and they readily acknowledge the greatness of their religious obligations : but, at the same time, they can find no inward satisfaction, no secret complacency, in obeying the divine commandments. I am not at present speaking of those who indulge in grosser sins : it would be almost an insult to praise a man, who had made even the least progress in Christianity, on account of his sobriety or his honesty.* The defect in the persons, whose characters I am describing, consists in their having a will untamed, unbending, and unsubdued. Their affections are too much placed on things below, and too little on things above. Whatever duties they perform are discharged from a sense of religious obligation *merely* ; not from finding

* “ Integritatem atque abstinenciam in tanto viro referre injuria virtutum fuerit.” *Tacit. Vit. Agric.* § 9.

in the discharge of them that spiritual pleasure, that communion with God, which appears to be at once the happiness and the privilege of a Christian. They do not take up the yoke with their whole heart, though conscience forces them in some measure to submit to it. They are strangers to that, which is prophesied of our Lord in the Psalms ; *I delight to do thy will O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart :** nor can they comprehend how it could be his *meat to do the will of him that sent him.†* They attempt indeed to perform this will ; but every effort is grief and weariness to them. They strive to conquer their dislike ; but instead of yielding, it seems rather to increase.

Thus far they coincide in some measure with those unhappy men, whose case has been already described ; but here, the grand, the constituent, difference between them com-

* Psalm xl. 8.

† John iv. 34.

menes. The former detest and oppose the law of God : the latter simply derive no pleasure from paying obedience to it, and are not interested in its precepts as they could wish to be. The first absolutely hate the divine image, which shines conspicuously in the character of every true Christian : the second love it, and labour earnestly to acquire it, grieving bitterly at the waywardness and perverseness of their hearts. The first are anxious to stifle the voice of conscience, and burn with rage against any person who attempts to rouse it : the second endeavour to keep the conscience tender, and do not cease to regard a neighbour as a friend, though he may point out failings and deficiencies. In short, the former stumble at the very threshold of Christianity : while the latter lament their unwillingness, yet continue striving to acquire a relish for their duty.

The condition of this second description of persons is doubtless uncomfortable, but yet

very far (I apprehend) from being dangerous. Let not such despair: let them not doubt, but that God, in his own good time, will accomplish the work, which he has begun within them. That they are possessed of *any* good wishes, that their hearts are *at all* inclined, *however small that inclination may be*, towards a desire of gaining the favour of God, is an argument of greater blessings yet in store for them. *Every good and every perfect gift cometh from above*; nor is a single one bestowed without carrying with it a demonstration of good will towards man. However dark and clouded may be the prospects of those, who acknowledge and lament the hardness of their hearts and their utter disinclination towards that which is good; blessed be God! despondency ought not to be their portion. He, who has promised that he will not *bruise the broken reed nor quench the smoking flax*, would never have raised those wishes for a better disposition of the heart, without an intention to

gratify them. *Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find*, is one of those comfortable promises, with which Scripture abounds: and we cannot, we ought not to doubt, but that the strength of Israel will except *every* one without distinction, who cometh to him in his Son's name. It is even possible, that a man's heart may be sincerely attached to God, when he himself is the most ready to suspect its sincerity. Actions, not words, are the best proofs of a state of grace; and the performance of those duties, from which our natural inclinations shrink, is assuredly the very highest exertion of religious obedience. Thus, if we may argue from our intercourse with each other, we are accustomed to set a much greater value upon the friendship, which will expose itself for our sake to difficulties and inconveniences, than upon that which in serving us merely gratifies its own inclinations. The road of duty is indeed thorny and painful to those, whose natural affections run in a differ-

ent channel : but let them earnestly pray to God to grant them strength and perseverance, to remove their heart of stone, and to give them a heart of flesh. The first of these petitions he will most assuredly listen to ; and, if the second be not immediately granted, they may be certain that the refusal proceeds from wise reasons best known to himself. He may for a time be deaf to their intreaties, with a view to try their faith and to exercise their patience ; to show them, what weak, miserable, helpless creatures they are without his assistance ; and to train them up in the school of spiritual discomfort, in order that they may be better prepared for the everlasting rest of heaven. This dissatisfaction with the world and with themselves proceeds from God ; and however painful it may be for the present, let them recollect, that the chastisement of their heavenly Father is the result, not of hatred, but of love. The sordid worldling, and the dissipated voluptuary, are strangers to that

conflict between duty and inclination, which exists in a greater or in a less degree within the bosom of every Christian. Hence it is evident that such a struggle, provided only that duty generally prevails, is an evidence of spiritual life. The dead feel not ; the living only possess the powers of action and sensation. In the mean time, till God is pleased to grant them more of that peace which passeth all understanding, let them strengthen their hearts with some such promises as the following.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,

*and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates with carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord : and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shall thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear : and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue, that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.**

* Isaiah liv. 7.

CHAPTER IV.

The influence of the Holy Spirit upon the will.

MAN being by nature in a state of complete darkness and ignorance, so far as relates to spiritual things, the first operation of the Holy Ghost must necessarily be to remove the veil from off his heart and to enlighten his understanding. This, however, as we have already seen, is of little use, unless the affections be also reclaimed from the love of sin and converted to the love of God. The divine principle, nevertheless, may exist in the heart, even when the

favoured possessor of it least suspects its presence and is almost ready to despair from his supposed deficiency in it. The striking difference between the character of these humble, dejected, self-condemning, believers, and the character of those unhappy men, who know the truth only to hate and reject it, has been sufficiently shown. Whatever degree of reluctance a man may feel in the performance of his duty, yet, if he *do* perform it, if he daily pray and strive against this reluctance, if, instead of hatred towards the Son of God, he at times be sensible of tender grief from the consciousness of his own obduracy and ingratitude; he may depend upon it, that these emotions, so opposite to the hellish temper of an unrenewed heart, are the first-fruits of that Spirit, whose peculiar office it is to *guide the Christian into all truth.*

Wicked men indeed have sometimes good wishes. Even Balaam, when obstinately re-

sisting the counsel of the Most High, could yet exclaim, *May I die the death of the righteous, and may my latter end be like his !* But unhappily these wishes only spring up occasionally. There is nothing of that *abiding* sense of God's presence, that restless desire of a *greater* degree of communion with him, which every real Christian is wont to experience. In the unconverted, good impressions, however lively at first, soon wear off; and they gradually return to their former habits of irreligion : but, in the children of God, such impressions perpetually acquire fresh vigour and energy ; they grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength, until they imperceptibly become the main spring of every thought and action.

“ The foulest hearts,” says Bishop Hall, “ do sometimes entertain good motions ; like as, on the contrary, the holiest souls give way sometimes to the suggestions of evil. The flashes of lightning may be discerned in the

darkest prisons : but, if good thoughts look into a wicked heart, they stay not there ; as those that like not their lodging, they are soon gone. Hardly any thing distinguishes betwixt good and evil, but continuance. The light, that shines into a holy heart, is constant, like that of the sun, which keeps due times, and varies not his course for any of these sublunary occasions.*

The Holy Spirit, then, having enlightened the understanding, proceeds, in the next place, to renovate the will and the affections. At first, the change in the inclinations is scarcely to be perceived. Oppressed with a load of superincumbent corruptions, the spark of divine life seems at times almost to approach to utter extinction. But not one word or one tittle of all God's promises can fail. The smoking flax will gradually burst out into a clear flame,

* Hall's Works, p. 1058.

when fanned by the gentle breezes of the Holy Spirit. A greater conformity will soon take place between the will of the Christian, and the will of his God. Even should this comfort be for a season denied, still he is under the protection of his Lord ; who views with a loving pity the struggle in his heart, and who will doubtless, as soon as it shall be expedient for him, cause *the light of his countenance to shine upon him*. Meanwhile *all things work together for his good* ; and, if his inclinations be deficient in fervency, his conscience acquires fresh tenderness and more acute discernment. The difficulty, which he finds in loving what he ought to love, gives him deeper views of sin and convinces him more effectually of his own utter inability. He now discovers, and believes, on the sure ground of actual experience, that *in himself dwelleth no good thing*, and that *all his sufficiency is of God*. So far from being faithful to grace, as some vainly talk, he daily

sees more and more of his unfaithfulness ; and, though he strives under the influence of the Holy Spirit to *work out his salvation*, yet he is constrained to acknowledge that *it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do*.

Since Scripture represents man in his natural state as *dead* in trespasses and sin ; it will follow, unless the whole propriety of the metaphor be destroyed, that he is totally unable, by any *inherent* strength of his own, to raise himself up to the *life* of righteousness. This figurative *resurrection* from the dead is the same, as what is sometimes termed, by a different metaphor, *regeneration* or a *new birth*. It is occasionally likewise represented as a *new creation*. All which images plainly teach us, both that a very essential change must take place in the moral constitution in order to a man's being a Christian, and that that change must be effected by some extrinsic power.

“ *To be born again* implies, that, as no man can bestow upon himself a natural being—Therefore the Scripture chooses to express this new birth by such terms as import in us an utter impossibility and impotency to effect it by our own power. It is called the quickening the dead ; *you hath he quickened*, says the Apostle, *who were dead in trespasses and sins*. Look, how impossible it is for a dead man, that is shut down under the bars of the grave, that is crumbled away into dust and ashes, to pick up every scattered dust and to form them again into the same members : look, how impossible it is for him to breathe without a soul, or to breathe that soul into himself. Alike impossible is it for a natural man, who hath lain many years in the death of sin, to shake off from himself that spiritual death, or to breathe into himself that spiriteal and heavenly life that may make him a living soul before God.”*

* Bishop Hopkins's Works, p. 531.

Most assuredly “for this great work God only is equal; it is not in our power to regenerate ourselves: for we are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, that is, not of any natural created strength, but of God.”* He it is, who maketh us new creatures. By his Holy Spirit, not by any strength of our own, the divine principle of love, without which no man can live well, is diffused through our hearts.†

So great a change, however, is not effected without much opposition on the part of those who are the subjects of it nor without a vehement exercise of that determined resolution, which God alone can confer upon them. “After many strugglings and conflicts with their

* Bishop Wilkins on prayer, chap. xvii.

† “Charitas Dei, sine qua nemo bene vivit, diffunditur in cordibus nostris, non a nobis, sed per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis” Augustin. Epist. 105.

lusts and the strong bias of evil habits," as it is rightly observed by Abp. Tillotson, "this resolution assisted by the grace of God, does effectually prevail and make a real change both in the temper of their minds and in the course of their lives: and when that is done, and *not before*, they are said to be *regenerate*."*

Well then might St. Austin exclaim, "To justify a sinner, to new create him from a wicked person to a righteous man, is a greater act, than to make such a new heaven and earth as is already made."† Well might the pious founders of our Church maintain that, "the more regeneration is hid from our understanding, the more it ought to move all men to wonder at the secret and mighty working of God's Holy Spirit, which is within us. For it

* Tillotson's Serm. on Gal. vi. 15.

† Cited in Homily for Rogat. Week. part i.

is the Holy Ghost, and no other thing, that doth quicken the minds of men, stirring up good and godly motions in their hearts, which are agreeable to the will and commandment of God, such as otherwise of their own crooked and perverse nature they should never have. *That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* As who should say, man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God, without 'any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds"—yet "such is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and as it were to bring them forth anew, that they shall be nothing like the men that they were before."*

* Homily for Whitsunday, part i. We may observe, that in this passage our venerable reformers, in exact accordance with the preceding citations from Abp. Tillotson and Bps. Hopkins and Wilkins, clearly speak of re-

The reason why our Lord insists so much upon the absolute necessity of that change of

generation as taking place in *adult* subjects ; and therefore do not attach it *necessarily*, and *in the way of cause and effect*, to baptism. Analogous to it, is the declaration in the catechism, that the two sacraments are only *generally* necessary to salvation. For, since our Lord asserts that regeneration is *absolutely* necessary to salvation, if our reformers had believed that the inward spiritual grace was altogether *inseparable* from the outward visible sign, they must have maintained that baptism was not merely *generally*, but *indispensably*, necessary to our entering into the kingdom of heaven. These explanatory declarations of their sentiments in the homilies and catechism will teach us, how we ought to understand the phrasology of the baptismal service. Sacramental regeneration is there hoped, in the judgment of charity, to be real regeneration ; just as St. Paul, in his epistles, is wont to address a whole church, as if *every one* of its members were *indisputable* heirs of salvation ; but, whether the subjects of baptism have *really* been renewed by the Holy Spirit, must be determined by their future conduct. In fact, if we maintain that regeneration is so

the heart usually denominated *regeneration*,^{*} appears to be simply this ; *without such change we should labour under a sort of natural unfitness to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* No man can be happy in the company of those, whose views and pursuits are totally dissimilar to his own. They must either conform to him, or he to them, before they will be able to associate together. He, that is uneasy in the

inseparable from baptism, that *every* baptized person is *regenerate*, and that *every* unbaptized person is *unregenerate* ; we shall be compelled to maintain that the devout Cornelius was absolutely in the gall of bitterness until he was baptized, while the baptized sorcerer Simon was a truly regenerate Christian, notwithstanding he is declared by Peter to have neither lot nor part in the Holy Spirit. If the reader wish to see the doctrine of regeneration clearly stated and the phraseology of the baptismal service ably explained, he would do well to peruse with attention four sermons by Bp. Hopkins, on John iii. 5. They form a complete treatise on the subject.

^{*} John iii. 1—21

presence of the pious upon earth, can never derive any pleasure from spending an eternity with them. The joys of heaven are described as purely spiritual ; so much so, that even the very best of men, in their present imperfect state, are unable fully to comprehend them. An intimate communion with God, an intense degree of devotion, a peace of mind which passeth all understanding, an entire coincidence of their will with the will of God, a never-ceasing round of praise and thanksgiving are proposed to the servants of Christ, as their stimulus here and their portion hereafter. But, if a man have no relish for any of these enjoyments, even Paradise itself would be no Paradise to him. What excited the highest pleasure in others, would produce in him no other sensations than those of weariness and disgust. His soul would sicken at the view of that happiness, which he was incapable of tasting ; and, like the fabulous Tantalus, he would starve in the midst of plenty.

On these grounds it is, that Bishop Reynolds somewhere remarks, with no less beauty than justice, that the man, who is weary of a single sabbath upon earth, can never derive any satisfaction from the observance of a perpetual sabbath in heaven. Every faculty of the soul must receive a new tendency ; the image of Satan must be gradually eradicated ; and the image of God must be planted in its stead ; or we can never expect to enter into the kingdom of Christ.

It may perhaps be asked, who then can be saved ? For where is the man whose will is in so perfect a state of conformity with the will of God, as to experience *no* inward resistance, *no* internal struggles, when obeying the divine commandments ? Where is the person, who possesseth such a degree of heavenly mindedness, as *always* to prefer the prospects of happiness in another world to the certainty of present gratification in this ?

I readily answer, that no such character exists on this side of the grave; nor are we to expect that any such ever will. The deeper insight a man acquires into his own heart, the more deeply will he be convinced of his inveterate corruption and manifold infirmities; the more bitterly will he bewail his sins, and lament the perverseness of his will and affections. Here we are not to expect any thing more, than the *beginning* of the spiritual life; the *consummation* and *perfection* of it is reserved for a richer soil and a more genial climate. The taint of original sin remains even “in them that are regenerated.”* The spirit indeed may be willing, but the flesh is weak. In the bosom of every true Christian, there is a never-ceasing conflict between two principles diametrically opposite to each other. His renewed heart wills to serve God, but his corrupt nature resists, and fights against his better incli-

* Art. ix.

nations. Such will necessarily be his condition, so long as he remains a member of the church militant. Nothing will terminate the warfare, but a translation into the church triumphant.*

St. Paul has left us upon record, for the edification of Christians in all ages, a very lively and affecting description of this contest between grace and nature. *That which I do, I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how*

* “ Quamdiu vivis, peccatum necesse est esse in membris tuis. Saltem illi regnum auferatur, non fiat quod jubet.” Aug. in Johan. Tract. 41.

to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

* Rom. vii. 15. "Cum corpus et terra, et spiritum possideamus e cælo, ipsi terra et cælum sumus; et in utroque, id est, et corpore et spiritu, ut *Dei voluntas fiat*, oramus.

This internal struggle, so far from being an argument against a renewed will, is the very test, which most decisively proves that it is renewed. While a man yields himself a willing slave to Satan, or while he conceals a total ignorance of his own heart under a decorous exterior ; he feels nothing of the contest between grace and nature, which is so grievous a burden to every real Christian. He has no conception of that restlessness and uneasiness of mind, so feelingly described by the great apostle of the Gentiles. Having never experienced the violent resistance which our depraved hearts make to the will of God, he has

Est enim inter carnem et spiritum colluctatio, et discordantibus adversus se invicem quotidiana congressio ; ut non quæ volumus ipsa faciamus. Dum spiritus cœlestia et divina quærit, caro terrena et secularia concupiscit : et ideo petimus impense inter duo ista, ope et auxilio Dei concordiam fieri : ut, dum et in spiritu et in carne voluntas Dei geritur, quæ per eum renata est anima servetur."
 Cyprian. de Orat. Domin

no idea of the difficulty of repentance and amendment ; nor does he believe that there is any need of divine influence to enable him to turn from the evil of his ways. Hence he readily adopts the Pelagian notion, that repentance is always in his own power ; and scoffs at the sober decision of our church, “ that the condition of man is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength, and good works, to faith and calling upon God.”* But, as soon as he attempts the arduous task of a real and vital reformation, a reformation which is not confined to bare external decorum, but which affects even the very inmost thoughts of the heart ; he then begins to find his weakness and inability, and is forced at length by repeated lapses to acknowledge that all his sufficiency is of God. Along with this conviction, he now for the first time, experiences the internal

* Art. x₄

Christian conflict ; he now perceives the full meaning of St. Paul's confession ; and, like him, is ready to exclaim, *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* Let him not, however, be discouraged, still less despair, on account of the opposition, which corrupt nature makes to the influences of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian, whatever may be his rank in life or his progress in piety, has had the same enemy to contend with. Let him recollect the promise, *My grace is sufficient for thee ;* nor let him doubt, but that he, *which redeemed Jacob from all evil,* is equally ready to assist all who find their need of a Saviour. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees ; say to them, that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not : behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense ; he will come and save you.**

Since probably few Christians of the present day will venture to claim even an equality with St. Paul in point of holiness, much less a superiority over him, we may derive from his memorable confession another important truth : that it is vain for man to dream of attaining to perfection in this world. Our very best deeds will ever be mingled with sin ; our very best wishes will ever be distracted with reluctance ; and our very best services will ever partake largely of corruption. Though some may strangely pervert the meaning of Scripture and falsely boast of an imaginary perfection, the humble disciple, who by bitter experience has known the plague of his own heart, cannot be thus lamentably deluded.* Free indeed

* 1 John iii. 9. "Hæc hominibus," says St. Jerome, "sola perfectio, si imperfectos se esse noverint." And St. Austin, "Nulla remansit infirmitas? Si non remansisset,

every one, that is born of God, must be from a *resolute habit* of sin, and from a *predetermined purpose* of enjoying its pleasures whenever they occur. But who shall cleanse himself from all his secret faults? Who is able to purify himself from offence in thought, in word, and in deed? Who shall dare to pronounce himself clear from the culpability of omission, as well as from the presumptuousness of commission? *If we say that we have no*

sine peccato hic viveremus. Quis autem audeat hoc dicere, nisi superbus? nisi misericordia liberatoris indignus? nisi qui seipsum vult decipere, et in quo veritas non est?" I cannot refrain from observing, that I have more than once met with writers, who no less roundly than unaccountably have asserted that the Calvinists hold the doctrine of *sinless perfection in those whom they denominate the elect*. The Calvinists hold no such doctrine, however unwarrantable may be their speculations on the abstruse points of predestination and reprobation:

*sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

Respecting the proper mode of carrying on the internal warfare of grace against nature, very excellent is the advice of Bp. Hall. "There are two men," says he "in every regenerate breast, the old and the new ; and of these, as they are ever plotting against each other, we must take the better side, and labour that the new man by being more wise in God may outstrip the old. And how shall that be done ? If we would dispossess the strong man that keeps the house, our Saviour bids us bring in a stronger than he ; and, if we would overreach the subtilty of the old man, yea the old serpent, bring in a stronger than he, even the Spirit of God, the God of wisdom."†

* 1 John i. 8.

† Bp. Hall's Works, p. 469.

Nor is this observation excellent only in the way of advice ; it affords also to every man a very useful test of his regeneracy. If he find that *two men* are perpetually at war within him, and that the one gradually prevails over the other ; he has no reason to doubt of the reality of his being a child of God, though he may never have felt any of those sudden and violent pangs of conscience which some appear erroneously to esteem the very essentials of regeneration. But, on the other hand, if he view his beloved self with a fond complacency, and if he be totally unacquainted with the never-ceasing inward warfare of a Christian ; he then has but too sufficient grounds to be very doubtful of the goodness of his state. “ There are *two men* in *every* regenerate breast.” Where the workings of *one* alone are perceptible, and where consequently there is *no* struggle, is it possible then, if Bp. Hall be a sound expositor, that the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit can ever have been really experienced ?

Upon the whole, we may conclude that, in the regenerate, the vicious inclinations of corrupt nature are not so much eradicated, as mortified and subdued. A new principle is instilled into the heart, diametrically opposite to the affections of the flesh, and waging an eternal war against them. It is vain to expect in this world, that duty will ever be entirely unattended with pain. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.** As a remnant of the idolatrous Canaanites was left in the midst of the children of Israel, to be a thorn in their sides and a perpetual snare to them;† so are the evil affections of a Christian a constant source of trouble and vexation to him. Yet these lusts of the flesh are kept in a state of abject slavery to their new master;

* Rom. viii. 7.

† Judg. ii. 3.

and although they may be disposed occasionally to rebel, and, in fact, do never cordially submit to the yoke imposed upon them, still are they daily constrained to bow beneath it, still are they daily losing some portion of their original strength and influence. At times, indeed, as every believer knows by woful experience, the house of Saul will appear to prevail against the house of David. Long and tedious is the war between them, a war which can only terminate with the extinction of one of the parties ; yet in the course of this spiritual struggle, it will be found that *David waxes stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker and weaker.** Even natural causes will contribute their mite of co-operation with the Spirit of grace. What at first was indescribably irksome, will through habit gradually become tolerable, if not palatable, even

* 2 Sam. iii. 1.

to our natural inclinations ; while the hope of a speedy victory and a glorious recompense will alleviate the hardships of the Christian warfare. Meanwhile the soul, through the assistance of the blessed Spirit, will be perpetually advancing in the paths of holiness, and perpetually discovering new beauty, and experiencing fresh pleasures in them. A delightful sense of security, a calm reliance upon the protection of God, and a consciousness of possessing an interest in the merits of the Saviour, will smooth the rugged path of duty, and make the rough places plain. *The communion of saints*, that golden though invisible chain which forms the connexion between the higher and the nether worlds, affords a never failing source of happiness to the believer. If a pagan could exult in the *uncertain* prospect of rejoining his friends in the realms of bliss,* what shall we say of

* Cicer. somn. Scip.

the *certain* view of futurity held out to the Christian? In a few, a very few years, death will be swallowed up in victory, the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at rest. Those associates, in whom he most delighted while upon earth, will soon rejoin him, pure, perfect, and sinless in heaven. He is conscious that at present there is a something in his nature, a bitter root of perverseness and corruption, which prevents him from attaining to that degree of holiness, that entire communion with God, beneath which his soul is unable to rest satisfied. *He delights in the law of God after the inward man, but he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind.** Hence arises a wish to quit this troublesome world and all its vanities : *a desire to be with Christ, which is*

* Rom. vii. 22.

*far better.** Yet is this wish unalloyed with discontent. The Christian can humbly resign himself, whether living or dying, to the good

* Did we feel the vanity of the world as practically, as we are ready to allow it theoretically, this wish would always be predominant in our hearts, though tempered, no doubt, with resignation to the will of heaven, and with humble gratitude for our deliverance from the merited penalties of sin. "Paulisper te crede subduci in montis ardui verticem celsiorem, speculari inde rerum infra te jacentium facies; et oculis in diversa porrectis, ipse a terrenis contactibus liber, fluctuantis mundi turbines intueri. Jam seculi et ipse misereberis; tuique admonitus, et plus in Deum gratus, majore lætitia quod evaseris gratulaberis. Cerne tu itinera latronibus clausa, maria obsessa prædonibus, cruento horrore castrorum bella ubique divisa: madet orbis mutuo sanguine; et homicidium cum admittunt singuli, crimen est; virtus vocatur cum publice geritur; impunitatem sceleribus acquirit, non innocentia ratio, sed sævitia magnitudo." Cyprian. ad. Donat. The sum and substance of practical wisdom is condensed in this short apophthegm, *The fashion of this world passeth away.*

pleasure of his heavenly Father, who knows, infinitely better than himself, what is good and proper for him. Thus, secure under the protection of his God, and firmly relying on the merits of his Saviour, he calmly awaits the hour of his dissolution; when he *shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*, when tears shall be wiped away from every eye, and when the sorrows of time shall give place to the joys of eternity.

CHAPTER V.

The Influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Affections.

WHILE the blessed Spirit of God is employed in illuminating the understandings, and in converting the wills of his servants, he is also working a gradual change in their affections. He weans them from the gross and terrestrial objects of sense, he mortifies the works of the flesh, and he draws up their minds to high and heavenly things.* He teaches them not

* Art xvii.

merely theoretically, but experimentally, the infinite disproportion between the pleasures of this world and the joy which is reserved for the faithful at the right hand of God. By slow and almost imperceptible degrees, a surprising change takes place within them. They no longer feel any relish for those vanities, which the slaves of dissipation esteem absolutely necessary for their happiness ; and what at first was resigned upon principles of duty and conscience, though with no small reluctance, now ceases to excite a single wish, and is considered with indifference or even aversion.*

* “ By this new nature the very natural motion of the soul, so taken, is obedience to God, and walking in the paths of righteousness, it can no more live in the habit and ways of sin, than a man can live under water. Sin is not the Christian’s element ; it is too gross for his renewed soul, as the water is for his body. He may fall into it,

The life of Christ is the beautiful exemplar, which every man under the guidance of the Holy Spirit endeavours to imitate. He finds himself uneasy in the society of those, whose daily conversation is the very reverse of that bright pattern, which was once, and only once, exhibited before the eyes of sinful mortality ; and he flies with delight to companions, whose habits and

but he cannot breathe in it ; cannot take delight and continue to live in it : but his delight is in the law of the Lord. That is the walk, that his soul refreshes itself in ; he loves it entirely, and loves it most, when it most crosses the remainders of corruption that are in him ; he bends the strength of his soul to please God, and aims wholly at that. It takes up his thoughts early and late ; he hath no other purpose in his being and living : but only to honour his Lord, that is, to live to righteousness. He doth not make a by-work of it, a study for his spare hours ; no, it is his main business, his all." Abp. Leighton's Works, vol. i. p. 402.

views are more congenial with his own. Still, whenever there is even a faint hope only of effecting a reformation, he seeks not morosely to shun the presence of the thoughtless and the dissipated.* Here his business is to watch for opportunities of usefulness; to avoid the appearance of unnecessary rigour; and to diffuse the practice of holiness, rather by occasional hints and general remarks, than by petulant reproof and pointed allusion. We are all, however absurd it may be, more subject to the influence of pride and self-conceit, than perhaps of any other species of mental criminality. It is the particular aim of Christianity to eradicate this master passion of the soul; and all,

* Ὅπου πλεῖον κόπος, πολὺ κέρδος. Καλοὺς μαθητὰς εἰν φιλῆς, χάρις σοι οὐκ ἔστιν· μαλλοὺ τοὺς καίμωτερος ἐν πραότητι ὑποτάττε. Οὐ παν τραύμα τῇ αὐτῇ ἐμπλαστρῇ βεβαπνεταί. Τοὺς παροξυσμοὺς ἡρεσυχίᾳ ταυε. Φρονιμὸς γίνου ὡς ὄφις ἐν ἀπάσιν, καὶ ἀκεραίᾳ ὥσει περιστέρα. Ignat. Epist. ad Polycarp.

who have had the least experience of their own hearts, will readily allow the difficulty of the work. If such be the confession of every humble, self-denying believer, with what a tremendous sway must the sin of pride rule in the breasts of the carnal and worldly-minded ! Men never much relish the being driven to their duty. Personal censure, and ill-timed advice, always convey an idea of superiority, and as such will always give offence. Impressed with the truth of these remarks, the Christian will endeavour to unite prudence with his zeal. He will strive rather to *lead* men into the paths of salvation, than to *compel* them to come in. Though ever upon the watch to do good, he will temper his watchfulness with judgment. He will study to remove all appearance of design and premeditation from what he says. He will seek to conciliate the affections of those with whom he converses. He will resolutely turn aside from every temptation to sarcasm and ridicule, as well knowing that the ap-

plause, which might perhaps be procured by his wit, would be but a poor recompense for the diminution, probably the loss, of his influence over an immortal soul. He will strive, in short, to inculcate the maxims of his religion by example, as well as by precept. With these views, and these resolutions, he will enter into company, and thus convert even an ordinary visit into a plan for promoting the glory of God.

The imitation, then, of Christ constitutes the principal study of those, who are influenced by the Holy Ghost. Whatsoever action they are about to perform, their first question is, whether Christ would have performed it, had he been in their situation: and it is their constant endeavour to regulate, not only their words, but their very thoughts, in a way resembling that, in which they have reason to conceive that he regulated his. Their ordinary employments, their amusements, their choice

of friends, nay even the most common transactions of their lives, will be brought to the same test. They contemplate the heavenly meekness of Christ : and labour to transfuse his spirit into their own hearts. They view his immaculate purity ; and strive with yet greater earnestness to put off the old man with his lusts. They behold his wonderful and disinterested love for mankind, displayed in a life of active benevolence and in a death full of pain and torment ; they hear him praying for his murderers, and see him anxiously concerned for the welfare of his friends, even when the prospect of his own bitter sufferings was directly before his eyes : and, full of these thoughts, they learn to abhor the narrow spirit of selfishness, and feel their souls alive both to the temporal and the eternal interests of all their brethren. They are taught by his blessed example to love their enemies, to bless those that hate them, and to pray for those that despitefully use them and persecute them.

Thus endeavouring to tread in the steps of their divine master, they gradually acquire a greater relish for heavenly enjoyments, and find themselves elevated above the fleeting pleasures of this transitory world. The amiable mildness and sweet serenity of the new disposition, which has been implanted in them is so conspicuous, that it cannot but be perceived even by those whose hearts are unaffected. It is true, that the man, who is naturally of a harsh and rugged temper, will never attain to the gentleness of those Christians, whose affections have been originally cast in a different and more beautiful mould. Something of the old leaven will yet remain, nor can it ever be totally removed except by the hand of death. Yet how pleasing is it to behold asperities gradually worn away, and, in direct opposition to the ordinary course of mere nature, a mild and placid old age succeeding to a morose and irritable manhood. Such will ever be the influence of real Christianity upon all the more un-

kindly passions of the human soul. Avarice will become liberality; uncleanness, purity; and selfishness, a generous desire of promoting the happiness of all mankind. *Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.*

“Give me,” says the eloquent Lactantius, “a man of a passionate, abusive, headstrong, disposition; with a few only of the words of God, I will make him gentle as a lamb. Give me a greedy, avaricious, tenacious, wretch; and I will teach him to distribute his riches with a liberal and unsparing hand. Give me a cruel, and blood-thirsty monster; and all his rage shall be changed into true benignity. Give me a man addicted to injustice, full of ignorance, and immersed in wickedness; he shall soon become just, prudent, and innocent. In the single laver of regeneration, he shall be cleansed from all his malignity.”*

* Lact. Inst. l. ii. c. 26.

Is it possible for a change like this to be effected by mere human means? The laws of a country may indeed operate so far as to prevent open violence, but the Holy Spirit of God is alone able to reach the soul. The artificial restraints of politeness are but a poor, a servile, imitation of that true urbanity of manners, that constant desire of being serviceable to all around us, which nothing but the gospel of Christ can teach. Pursue the man of the world into his retirements; and the smiling insinuating courtier will frequently be metamorphosed into the negligent and cruel husband, or the harsh and tyrannical master. His natural temper, now no longer under any restraint, breaks out with redoubled violence, and vents itself on those who are unhappily subjected to his power. Widely different is the conduct of the Christian. Acting from a higher principle, and experiencing the changing influence of the Spirit in the very inmost recesses of his heart, he is uniform and con-

sistent at all times and in all places. He is the same character in private and in public, at home and abroad. His politeness is the politeness of the heart, not the spurious offspring of a studied and elaborate refinement.

It is striking to observe the different effects of religion and irreligion on persons, who are naturally of very opposite dispositions.

The originally mild and gentle Nero was soon corrupted by the charms of despotism and the flattery of sycophants. Proceeding from bad to worse, he became ultimately one of the bloodiest tyrants upon record; the terror and aversion of his enslaved subjects: the murderer of his brothers, his wives, and his mother; and the bitter persecutor of Christianity.

The impetuous, blood-thirsty, and unrelenting Saul, on the contrary, the furious opposer of the Gospel, and the determined enemy of

the Messiah, was changed into the amiable, fervent, and affectionate, apostle, ready to bear all hardships, and to submit to all the wayward and petulant humors both of Jew and of Gentile, in order that he might gain some to the cause of his Lord. Read that beautiful specimen of the conciliatory, his epistle to Philemon. *We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Wherefore, though I might be much boid in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me; whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind*

would I do nothing ; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. Who would ever have supposed, that this delicate and condescending address could have proceeded from the pen of the haughty and implacable Saul ? What an astonishing difference between the mild yet dignified apostle, and the relentless bigot, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, making havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women to prison !

Whence then could arise this difference, as singular as it is palpable, except from the opposite influences of grace and nature, the one gradually correcting the malignant propensities of the human heart, the other cherishing and fostering them ? Had the black list of his future crimes been prophetically displayed before the eyes of the youthful Nero, he would have been inclined to ask, in the words of

Hazael, *Am I a dog, that I should do these things?* Such often is the language of modern Infidelity ; but by their fruits are the disciples of Christ best distinguished from the upholders of the empire of Satan.

The dignity of human nature ; the eternal fitness of things ; the moral sense ; the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice : the tendency of the heart to the one and its repugnance to the other ; the superiority of philosophy over Christianity ; the charms of universal philanthropy and disinterested benevolence : have in our own memory been repeatedly and triumphantly brought forward. The God of Israel has been insulted to his face ; his statutes, and his ordinances, have been ridiculed ; the person of his Son has been vilified ; the operations of his Holy Spirit have been held up, as a mad enthusiasm ; and Christianity has been traduced, as the artful machination of a designing impostor. We have been

informed that, when philosophy should take the lead, a new and happier order of things would succeed to the present. Emancipated from the shackles of priestcraft and tyranny, human reason would expand itself to its full growth, and infallibly conduct us to peace, to love, and to happiness. Religion, the bugbear of deluded mortals, would hide her diminished head; prejudices would vanish from off the face of the earth; cruelty and despotism would become extinct with priests and kings; and the infinite perfectibility of our nature would commence. Wars would be no more heard of; and mankind would be one large family, united by the ties of a generous affection, and actuated by one common principle of mutual improvement. Thus conferring and receiving happiness, we should behold the vast globe itself gradually converted into a terrestrial paradise.

Such vain dreams of self-intitl'd philosophers have at length received a tremendous confuta-

tion. We have seen realized, in these last days, the theory of a people without prince, without priest, and without religion. We have seen the Gospel withdrawn from a nation, which had long either perverted its doctrines, or scoffed at its truths. We have seen that nation formally cast off the authority of God. We have seen her left to legislate, and frame fantastic codes of natural religion, for herself. It almost appears as if God had wisely permitted the experiment to be tried, in order that man might be taken in his own folly, that the different effects of Christianity and of unbelief might be placed in the most striking point of view, and that the pride of Infidelity might be for ever humbled in the dust. The religion of God, and the religion of Satan, have been palpably contrasted together. They have both equally promised the blessings of philanthropy, universal charity, and diffusive benevolence; they have both equally declared the happiness of man to be their object: and

they have both equally held out the prospect of ameliorating our nature, and of eradicating the seeds of ignorance, cruelty, and corruption.

That the Gospel has most faithfully performed its promise, the comfortable experience of every sincere believer will joyfully acknowledge. Many indeed there are, who, while they bare the name of Christians, are totally unacquainted with the power of their divine religion. But for *their* crimes the gospel is in no wise answerable. Christianity is with them a geographical, not a descriptive, appellation. In strict propriety of speech, they are no more Christians, than the unconverted savages, who roam through the trackless deserts of America. The same reason equally serves to prove the truth of this assertion, and to show how little Christianity is bound to answer for their misconduct. *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which*

*is one inwardly : and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.**

We may now ask, in what manner has Infidelity kept *her* promise to her deluded followers? She has opened the floodgates of licentiousness and immorality ; she has deified lust, pride, and blasphemy ; she has encouraged an indiscriminate cruelty and thirst of blood ; she has trampled upon those rights of man, which she affected to vindicate ; and she has endeavoured to tear away the only remaining comfort of the wretched, the hope of speedily exchanging the miseries of this life for the happiness of a better. Such are the fruits of high-vaulting infidelity.

The effect, indeed, which this sin of sins produces upon the mind, is precisely the reverse of

* Rom. ii. 28.

that change of heart, which in Scripture is metaphorically termed *regeneration*. An overweening pride, a hatred of all restraints, a contempt of those milder virtues in which Christianity so particularly delights, are the usual characteristics of the anarch and the deist. Where did we ever behold the infidel exhibiting any of those fruits of the Spirit, which are the marks, the exclusive marks, of those that have been born again? The levity, with which one of the most celebrated champions of deism is said to have met death, even if the account be true, is surely very different from the calm serenity, the filial gratitude, and the trembling confidence, of an expiring Christian. When Mr. Hume was drawing near to that awful crisis, which, one would think, even the best of men could not behold with indifference, how did he employ the few last weeks of a fleeting existence? He read Lucian, played at whist, and amused himself with anticipating the conversation which was to take place between himself and Charon! “Drollery,” says Bishop

Horne, "in such circumstances, is neither more nor less than

Moody madness, laughing wild
Amid severest woe.

Would we know the baneful and pestilential influences of false philosophy on the human heart, we need only contemplate them in this most deplorable instance of Mr. Hume." Such was the man, whom his biographer considers, "both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a *perfectly wise and virtuous man*, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit!"

Let us now view a Christian's anticipation of death.

Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.**

In this last address of the aged Paul to his beloved son Timothy, when the prospect of a speedy dissolution was full before him, the marks of a regenerate and sanctified believer must be evident even to the most careless observer. While the Apostle joyfully anticipates the promised reward, and looks forward with eagerness to that happy day, when corruptible shall put on incorruption, and when mortal shall put on immortality, his affectionate heart still yearns towards those friends whom he is about to leave behind him, and almost his last thoughts are employed in pointing out the most

* 2 Tim. iv. 5.

effectual means of diffusing Christian knowledge.

Infidelity has of late years displayed a zeal in propagating her sentiments, but little inferior to that of primitive Christianity : yet, in the midst of her labours, she has shown, in a most striking manner, the difference of the spirit, with which the regenerate and the unregenerate are actuated.

The martyr Stephen, in imitation of his blessed Lord, spent his last breath in interceding for his murderers. Prayers were the sole arms of the church of Christ, agreeably to his express prohibition of attempting to diffuse the gospel by violence ; and never did the papists err more completely, than when they called in the secular arm.

But what is the treatment, which all the opponents of Infidelity must expect, notwithstanding

ing her perpetual appeal to toleration, candour, liberality, and humanity? One of her warmest adherents desired only “to die on a heap of Christians immolated at his feet;” Voltaire proposed, in case his antichristian plan should succeed, to strangle the last Jesuit with the bowels of the last Jansenist; a regal apostate avowed, that Infidelity could never be established, except by the exertion of a superior force; and d’Alembert expressed a wish not unworthy even of a Nero, a wish to see a whole nation exterminated, simply because they professed the Christian religion.*

The meek and submissive spirit of regeneration prompted the apostle to forbid, even upon pain of damnation, all resistance to the lawfully constituted powers of government. He rightly judged, that self-vindication was inconsistent with the character of him, who has been born again; of him, who expects his portion, not in

* Barruel, Mem. of Jacobinism.

this world, but in the next. His precepts were faithfully obeyed by the primitive Christians ; and there is not a single instance upon record of any resistance being made even to the bloodiest persecutions of the heathen emperors.

This humility and gentleness, Infidelity treats with the most sovereign contempt ; she spurns at the idea of a meek and contented obedience ; and she values not the blessing of a quiet spirit. Unlike that evangelical charity, which *seeketh not her own*, she clamorously demands her rights, and preaches the legality of open insurrection and rebellion. The gospel reverently looks up to God, as the sole fountain of power, both civil and ecclesiastical ; but Infidelity proudly scoffs at the degrading sentiment, and confers upon the populace the prerogative of Jehovah.

I have dwelt the more largely upon the spirit of Infidelity, in order that it might form the more striking contrast to that of a regenerate

Christian under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. In a painting, light appears more vivid from being placed in the vicinity of darkness; and beauty possesses a tenfold degree of attraction in the neighbourhood of deformity. It is impossible to avoid seeing the difference between the real believer, and the man who makes this world his god. Setting aside all discrepancies of *opinion*, who is there, that does not perceive the wonderful dissimilarity between the *character* of Paul, and that of a Hume or a Voltaire? Who can avoid acknowledging that some important change must have taken place in the one, of which the others were totally ignorant? There was a time when the great apostle of the gentiles, an apostle, moreover, well versed in the most polite literature of the age, hated, with Voltaire, the very name of Christ; and would gladly, with d'Alembert, have exterminated, at a single blow, the whole multitude of the faithful. What then can it be, which hath made him to

differ? Let us humbly confess, or rather let the Apostle himself confess, that *it was God, who worked in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Without the converting and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, Paul would for ever have remained dead in trespasses and sins.

In fine, to use the emphatic language of Scripture, the regenerate are *the temple of the blessed Spirit, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone.** God himself condescends to dwell within them;† and, like the Sheehinah in his magnificent house at Jerusalem, sanctifies, illuminates, and directs them.‡ What the soul is to the body, the Holy Spirit

* Ephesians ii. 20.

† 1 Cor. iii. 16. 2 Tim. i. 14. 1 John iv. 12. 15, 16.

‡ Ουδεν λαμβανει τον Κυριον, αλλα και τα κρυπτα ημων εγγυς αυτω εστιν. Παντα ουν ποιωμεν ως αυτου

is to the Church. By his powerful agency, its members are not only enlightened and actuated individually ; but, like the several parts of the natural body, they are connected and held together in spiritual peace, order, union, and harmony.*

Such, and so great are the privileges and endowments of a Christian. However those, that sit in the chair of the scorner, may mock at the counsel of God, and deride the operations of his Holy Spirit ; they, who have expe-

ΕΝ ΗΜΙΝ ΚΑΤΟΙΚΟΥΝΤΟΣ, ἵνα ᾤμεν αὐτοῦ ναοί, καὶ αὐτὸς ᾔεν
 ἡμῖν θεὸς ἡμῶν, ὅπερ καὶ ἐστὶν καὶ φανήσεται προ
 προσώπου ἡμῶν ἐξ ᾧν δικαίως ἀγαπᾶμεν αὐτόν.
 Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes.

Conversemur quasi Dei templa, ut Deum in nobis constet habitare. Nec sit degener actus noster a Spiritu, ut qui cœlestes et spirituales esse cœpimus, non nisi spiritualia et cœlestia cogitemus et agamus. Cyprian. de Orat. Domin.

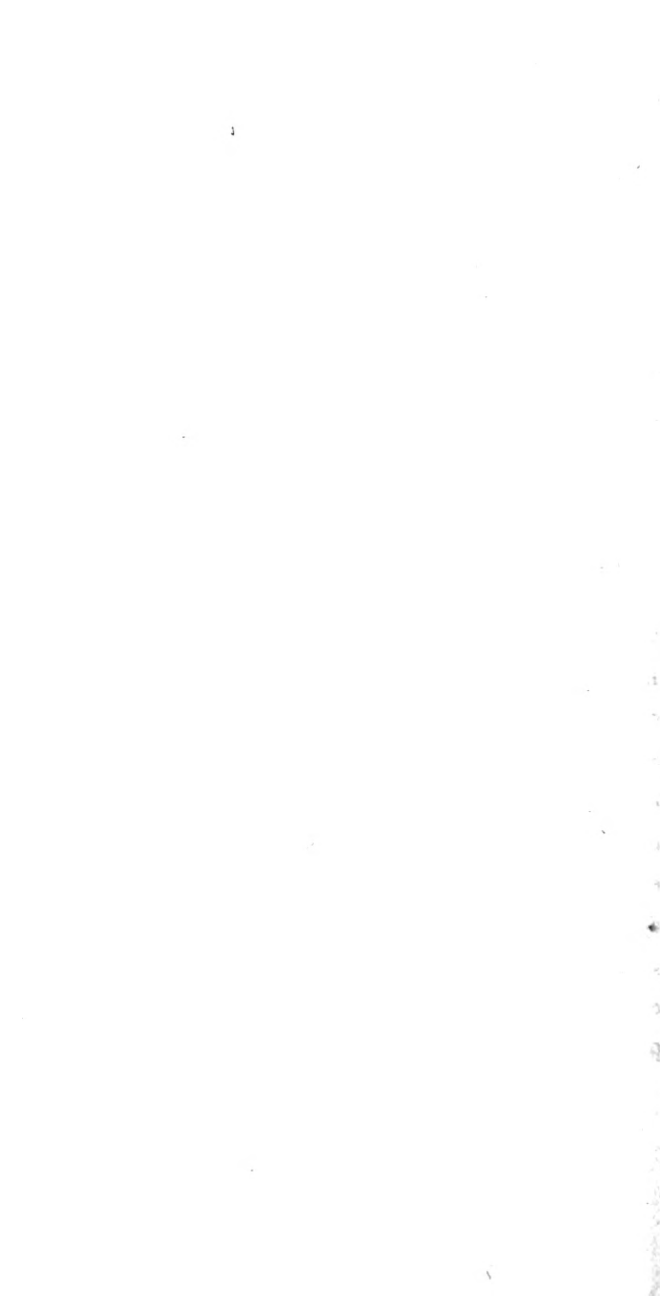
* Barrow's Works. Vol. ii. p. 505.

rienced the benefit of his influence, thankfully acknowledge the greatness of his power in the conversion and sanctification of a sinner. They know, in whom they have believed. *If God be for them, who can be against them? In all things they are more than conquerors through him that loved them.*

Blessed be God, even in these latter days of the Christian Church, his arm is not shortened. He is still both able and willing to save all, who come to him in his Son's name. His promises yet receive their accomplishment, nor can one jot or one tittle of his word fail. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and, if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. For I am*

*persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

* Rom. viii. 14. 38.



CHAPTER VI.

The Holy Spirit, a Comforter, and an Intercessor.

THE Christian, who has been accustomed to observe the workings of his heart, well knows that there are times, in which his views of a better world are greatly darkened and obscured. He is deprived of that comfortable reliance on the fatherly goodness of God, which once constituted his greatest joy and his highest privilege. His love towards his Saviour appears to be strangely diminished; and, instead of that fervent affection which once he experienced, he feels nothing but a cold and painful indifference. He sees others rejoicing

in the paths of holiness, and full of that peace which passeth all understanding; while his better prospects are fearfully clouded, and a deep gloom overhangs his dejected spirits. Scripture, instead of offering him consolation, presents only a menacing aspect; and he dwells, with an oppressive melancholy, upon those passages, which contain the severe denunciations of an offended God against hardened and impenitent sinners. Ordinances, that once seemed to bring all heaven upon his ear, now delight no more; and, though he sedulously frequents them, he appears to himself to have, as it were, no interest in them. The precious dew of God's Holy Spirit descends upon all around him; while he alone, like Gideon's fleece, remains unaltered. Public and private devotion are equally inefficacious; and even the social conversation of a dear and religious friend no longer produces its wonted effect. Weary of himself and sick of the world, bewailing the deadness of his

own heart, and mourning for the loss of those better days which once he knew, he is ready to exclaim *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest.**

Such appears frequently to have been the case with that favoured servant of God. the holy Psalmist of Israel. *O Lord, rebuke me*

* “In spiritual trials, that are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving kindness from its feelings, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure, when he writes bitter things against it; yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, this is not only a true, but a strong, and very refined faith indeed, and the more he smites, the more to cleave to him. Well might he say, *When I am tried, I shall come forth as gold.* Who could say that word, *Though he slay me yet will I trust in him?* though I saw, as it were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.” Abp. Leighton’s Comment. on 1 Pet. 1—7.

*not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me; as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.**

In another psalm he exclaims; my tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

* Psalm xxxviii.

*When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me : for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy-day. Notwithstanding this use of outward means, the heart of the prophet could still find no comfort ; Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts ; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. In this melancholy situation, David looks up for help to him, from whom alone help can come. O my soul, hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.**

While the Christian labours under this depression of spirits, the subtle enemy of mankind is busily employed in harassing and dis-

* Psalm xlii.

tracting his soul. A thousand anxious doubts and fears are suggested to him. His former happy communion with God appears only like a delusion ; and he is tempted to suspect, that he never knew what real religion is. All those arguments and evidences, from which he once concluded that he was at peace with Christ, no longer retain their former efficacy, but seem to have vanished into empty air. While he thus *suffers the terrors of God with a troubled mind* ; he is almost induced to believe, that the Most High hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath for ever shut up the bowels of his compassion against him.*

* There are some very useful observations on this subject, in a sermon by the late Bp. Horn, intitled *The blessing of a cheerful heart*. He judiciously refers the gloom which I have been describing, ultimately to a kind of infidelity, a timorous distrust of God's promises. Something of that sort will generally be found at the bottom of religious despondency, insomuch that every Christian

Persons in this uncomfortable state ought first to consider, whether their ease does not require the physician rather than the divine. It is almost superfluous to observe, what has been already so often observed, how wonderful a connexion there is between the soul and the body. A long train of nervous affections will generally produce, if I may use the metaphor, a kind of enervation of the mind. Its faculties will lose their elasticity; and a deep depression of spirits will take place of that comfort and serenity, which it is the direct tendency of Christianity to inspire. Thanks be to God, our religion is not a system of gloomy observances, or a succession of rites which freeze the soul with horror, and teach it to

has great reason daily to pray, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief*. See also Bp. Reynolds' works, p. 458, and Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*, chap. xxiv. from which very valuable treatise many of the following observations are borrowed.

consider the beneficent Creator in the light of a sanguinary and unrelenting demon. The Gospel contains *glad* news of great salvation to lost mankind ; and, as such, ought to convey to us sensations of *pleasure*, not of sorrow and melancholy. If, therefore, disorder be the sole cause of this painful dejection, a mere natural malady must be remedied by natural means ; for we have no right to expect that God should interfere with a miracle, in order to prevent a bodily distemper from producing its ordinary effect upon the mind.

But, where the corporeal frame is in a state of perfect good health, and where every nerve is strung up to its proper pitch, if this painful sense of alienation from God, so emphatically and beautifully styled in Scripture *the hiding of God's face*,* still subsist ; it will then be

* Isai. lxiv. 7. and lix. 2.

necessary to commence a deep and impartial scrutiny both of the inward thoughts and of the outward conversation. Sins may have been committed, and repentance may have been neglected. Or, if external pollution has been avoided, the imagination may have been for some time past deliberately and habitually tainted with impurity, inflamed with hatred, or too eagerly and *exclusively* employed upon sensible objects. Should such, upon a candid examination, appear to have been the case, we may rest assured, that *our offences have separated between God and us*, and that *our iniquities have caused him to withdraw the cheering light of his Holy Spirit*. Even supposing that the conscience does not plead guilty to these offences, we may possibly find, upon a more close search, that we have not entirely surrendered ourselves to the service of our heavenly master. Some secret reservation, some private compromise, may still be made. Like Ananias, we may be in-

clined to give only a part to God, still retaining the remainder for ourselves. Whichever of these be the case with us, it is our duty immediately to put away from us the accursed thing and humbly to solicit peace and reconciliation with heaven.—If we find within ourselves a readiness to submit to the painful task of self-examination, that very circumstance ought to be a matter of comfort to us in the midst of our dejection.—“It is a good sign of grace,” as Bp. Hopkins well observes, “when a man is willing to search and examine himself, whether he be gracious or not. There is a certain instinct in a child of God, whereby he naturally desires to have the title of his legitimation tried; whereas a hypocrite dreads nothing more than to have his rottenness searched into.—Try yourselves by this; do you love the word of God because it is a searching word, because it brings home convictions to you, and shakes your carnal confidences and presumptions? Do you love a ministry, that

speaks as closely and particularly to you, as if it were another conscience without you ; a ministry, that ransacks your very souls, and tells you all that ever you did ? Do you delight in a ministry, that forceth you to turn inward upon yourselves, that makes you tremble and look pale at every word, for fear it should be the sentence of your damnation ? This is a sign that your condition is good, because you are so willing to be searched.”*

If such be our case, and if, after a diligent scrutiny, we are able to discover nothing more than those ordinary imperfections with which the life of the very best Christian is chequered ; if we cannot detect any *particular* cause of that gloom, which overhangs our spirits : let us not in such circumstances be like unto **men** without hope. We may depend upon it,

* Bishop Hopkins' Works, p. 553.

that we are exposed to this trial for the wisest and most merciful purposes. *All things will finally work together for good to those that love God.* Perhaps it may be necessary for our spiritual welfare, that our faith should be proved, that our self-confidence should be abated, and that we should be made to see that man, even in his best estate, is altogether vanity. The careless and the inconsiderate are ignorant even of the very existence of this internal distress. Those, that God loveth, are the persons whom he more particularly chasteneth. If David was so frequently constrained to mourn by reason of affliction, and to exclaim in the bitterness of his heart, *Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?** can we reasonably expect to be made perfect without suffering? Our blessed Saviour himself was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and such also his disci-

* Psalm lxxxviii. 14.

ples must frequently be. His tender care, however, has not left us without a provision against the day of evil tidings. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.** This promise he was afterwards pleased to explain more at large, and to point out to us that gracious personage, through whose agency we may expect to receive the balm of consolation. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of Truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless.†*

In these words, another very important office of the Holy Ghost is pointed out to us ; and a promise is made, that he should abide with us for ever in the capacity of a comforter.

* Matt. v. 4.

† John xiv. 16.

Through the midst of that gloom, with which the Christian is sometimes surrounded, a ray of light at length breaks in upon his soul, and dissipates the heavy clouds of despondency. His mourning is turned into joy; and, instead of his ashes, he receives the oil of gladness. His filial confidence in God is again restored to him; he clearly sees the infinite merit of his Redeemer's sufferings; and doubts not to apply to himself that gracious invitation, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Such are the great things, which God the Spirit hath done for his soul, and which he fails not to acknowledge with praise and thanksgiving. The remembrance of his past sorrows heightens his present joy; his faith is greatly increased; and he learns to *cast his burden upon the Lord,** who alone is able to sustain him.†

* Psalm lv. 22.

† "The peace that we have with God in Christ, is

The Holy Psalmist frequently celebrates the goodness and mercy of God for having delivered him from this oppressive load of mental indisposition. *I waited patiently for the Lord ; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of the horrible pit,*

inviolable ; but, because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul, that is truly at peace with God, may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend. *Thou hidest thy face*, saith David, *and I was troubled*. But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed, and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring ; and this ought always to uphold Christians in the saddest times, viz. that the grace and love of God, towards them, depends not on their sense, nor upon any thing in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration." Abp. Leighton's Works, Vol. i. p. 47.

out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* Most indeed of those Psalms, which begin sorrowfully, terminate with expressions of joy and triumph. In short, as Dr. Barrow well observes, “it is a notable part of the Holy Spirit’s office to comfort and sustain us, as in all our religious practice, so particularly in our doubts, difficulties, distresses, and afflictions; to beget joy, peace, and satisfaction in us, in all our performances, and in all our sufferings, whence the title of *comforter* belongeth to him.”†

In addition to the internal trials of harassing doubts and fears, the Christian is also exposed

* Psalm xl. 1.

† Barrow’s Works, vol. ii. p. 505.

to those external ones which are the common lot of mortality. His communion with God does not exempt him from calamity and disease, from the loss of his dearest relatives, and from the ingratitude of his most confidential friends. They, whose portion is in this world, are frequently much less subject to temporal misfortunes, than the pious and the just. Troubles of various kinds are often the lot of the most highly favoured children of God. It is good for them to be kept in a state of perpetual warfare, in order that they may be safe from carnal security and effeminate indulgence. The luxury of Capua proved more fatal to the Carthaginian hero, than all the efforts of Roman valour : and a Christian is never more in danger, than when taught by prosperity to consider himself no longer in an enemy's country. Whatever his afflictions are, he may rest assured that they are sent in mercy, not in anger ; that they are designed to wean his affections from sub-

lunary objects, and to rivet them more immoveably upon the promised joys of heaven. When every earthly prospect of felicity is blasted by the pangs of disease or the inroads of poverty, by the premature death of our best beloved friends, or the loss of worldly reputation for the sake of our religion ; we then learn to look for happiness beyond the grave, in those blessed abodes where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. In such distressing circumstances, the Christian is not deserted by his Saviour ; and he soon finds, by his own happy experience, that the Lord is a God who keepeth his promise with a thousand generations. Through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, he finds a light springing up in the midst of darkness ; his sorrows are gradually assuaged ; his confidence in God is increased ; and he is brought at length to acknowledge that it is good for him, that he has been afflicted. *We now have sor-*

*rose, said our blessed Lord to his disciples, but I will see you again, and your joy no man taketh from you.**

It is usually so ordered by the merciful Providence of God, that, when worldly comforts are at the lowest ebb, and when earthly enjoyments are violently torn away from our grasp ; the soul is then best fitted for divine exercises, and acquires a more thorough insight into heavenly matters. This sacred consolation seems to be increased or diminished, according to the varying exigencies of the Christian. During the pains of martyrdom, all heaven opened upon the enraptured eyes of Stephen ; and he beheld his Saviour ready to receive him into the mansions of everlasting felicity. Unless, however, we should be placed in a similar situation, we certainly have no grounds to expect

* John xvi. 22.

an equal degree of comfort : yet, when the pious believer is stripped of all the good things which this world can afford, and when the iron has entered into his very soul ; when his mortal part is wasting away with disease, and when his immortal spirit trembles on the verge of futurity ; is it unreasonable to suppose that the God, who hath promised to make all his bed in his sickness, will be his guide and his support even to death itself ? While the current of life is fast ebbing, never to flow again in this world ; may we not humbly trust that the Holy Spirit will descend into the soul with a full tide of glory, that all misgiving fears and anxious doubts will be removed, and that the terror of uncertainty will be converted into the filial confidence of hope ?*

* Far be it from me to assert, that these sensible comforts are in the *slightest* degree *necessary* and *essential* to *salvation* : on the contrary, it is highly probable, that the sum of many of God's faithful servants hath set behind a

“ I trust, Beloved,” says the judicious Hooker, “ we know that we are not reprobates, because our spirit doth bear us record, that the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ is in us. It is as easy a matter for the spirit within you to tell whose ye are, as for the eyes of your body to judge where you sit or in what place you stand.—For they, which fall away from the grace of God and separate themselves unto perdition, they are fleshly and carnal, they have not God’s Holy Spirit. But unto you, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, to the end ye might know that Christ hath built you upon a rock unmoveable ; that he hath registered your names in the book of life ; that he hath bound

cloud, in order only to rise with greater splendour in the Kingdom of heaven. The *possibility*, and the *necessity*, of such comforts, are two entirely distinct ideas.

himself in a sure and everlasting covenant to be your God, and the God of your children after you.—The Lord, of his infinite mercy, give us hearts plentifully fraught with the treasure of this blessed assurance of faith unto the end.”*

We are not however to imagine, that the comforts of a Christian are uniformly the same at all times, or that an equal sense of being at peace with God is granted to every believer. “This assurance,” says the excellent Archbishop Leighton, “all the heirs of glory have not ordinarily within them, and scarce any at all times equally clear. Some travel on in a covert cloudy day, and get home by it, having so much light as to know their way, and yet do not at all clearly see the bright and full sun-

* Hooker's Works Vol. III. p. 557, 558. Oxf. Edit.

shine of assurance : others have it breaking forth at some times, and anon under a cloud : and some more constantly. But, as all meet in the end, so all agree in this in the beginning, that is, the reality of the thing ; they are made unalterably sure heirs of it, in their effectual calling.”*

The scriptural expression, *the*^{1p} *seal of the Spirit*, seems plainly to signify, that the soul of that Christian, upon whom it is impressed, bears as evident marks of conformity to the will of God, as the wax does of similarity to the seal by which it has been stamped.† By means of this resemblance, *the Spirit beareth*

* Works, Vol. ii. p. 340.

† See Bp. Hopkins's Works, p. 529. Bp. Andrews's Works, p. 654. 660. Bp. Hooper's Works, p. 581. Bp Wilkins on Prayer, p. 226.

witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, thus infusing into our hearts the sweet balm of divine consolation. As the Christian clearly discerns, that there is a natural unfitness in the unregenerate soul to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; so, in consequence of the change, which has taken place within him, he argues, that the regenerate soul, the soul which bears the impression of the seal of the Spirit, is also unfit for the society of the damned. However deeply he may be conscious of his numerous deficiencies, yet he finds within himself a certain relish and affection for heavenly matters, 'which he knows is foreign to his nature, and which consequently must have been derived from some external influence. *Of ourselves we can neither will nor do any thing that is good* : he finds, that he *does* both will and do that which is good, though in a degree far inferior to his wishes : hence he concludes, that his sufficiency is derived, not from himself, but from God. He

looks around him and perceives that the bulk of mankind have no standard of action except their own inclinations ; they consider not what is acceptable to God, but what is pleasing to themselves ; and their own gratification is the sole end of all their pursuits. On the contrary, he cannot avoid observing, though it be with the utmost humility, that his conduct is influenced by widely different principles. Self is daily mortified, and the sense of duty is daily strengthened. *His lofty looks are humbled, and his haughtiness is bowed down : the Lord alone is exalted, and his honour alone is consulted.** Though he may perpetually fall short of his intentions, yet those intentions remain unaltered ; and his fixed purpose is to *do all things to the glory of God*. When he considers what has been done for his soul, he is filled with gratitude and humility. His

* Isaiah ii. 11.

own vileness forms such a contrast with the mercy of his Redeemer, as fills him with astonishment ; and he is constrained to acknowledge that the whole is the Lord's doing. Such is that blessed correspondence of our inclinations with the will of God, which Scripture denominates *the seal of the Spirit* ; such are those strong consolations, which the Almighty alone is able to bestow upon us.

Nor does the title of *Paraclete* convey simply the idea of a *comforter* ; it is also the office of the Holy Ghost to suggest to us fit matter for our devotions, and to present our imperfect supplications before the throne of grace. Of ourselves, we are unable to offer up a single acceptable prayer ; for *every good and every perfect gift cometh from above*. Hence the Apostle declares, that *the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groan-*

*ings which cannot be uttered.** He is our advocate at the bar of heaven, where he continually pleads in our behalf the merits of our blessed Saviour with an eloquence, of which mortal tongues are incapable. To adopt the language of the pious Barrow, “He reclaimeth us from error and sin; he supporteth and strengtheneth us in temptation; he adviseth and admonisheth, exciteth and encourageth us to all works of piety and virtue.—He guideth, and quickeneth us in devotion: showing us what we should ask; raising in us holy desires and comfortable hopes; disposing us to approach unto God with fit dispositions of mind, love, and reverence, and humble confidence.—He is also our intercessor with God; presenting our supplications, and procuring our good. He cryeth in us, he pleadeth for us to God. Whence he is peculiarly called

* Rom. viii. 26.

παράκλητος, *the advocate*; that is, one, who is called in by his good word, or countenance to aid him, whose cause is to be examined, or petition to be considered.”*

These are the benefits, which the Christian receives from the Holy Spirit, in the way of consolation and intercession. In the midst of his troubles, he is not left comfortless; for he is perfectly assured and convinced, that God careth for him. A peace unknown to the wicked is diffused over his heart; and he gratefully confesses that the hand, which bestowed it, must be divine. He approaches the throne of grace without fear; for he *knows in whom he hath believed*, and relies upon the intercession of the Almighty Spirit. Impressed with the conviction of these great truths, he can joyfully take up the words of the Psalmist;

* Barrow's Works, Vol. ii. p. 505.

*The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.**

* Psalm xvi.



CHAPTER VII.

The fruits of the Spirit contrasted with the works of the flesh.

I. NOTWITHSTANDING the preceding discussion, some one may still perhaps be inclined to ask, *How am I to know, whether my understanding, my will, and my affections, have indeed been acted upon by the Holy Spirit of God?* The question is a most important one, yet, I trust, by no means unanswerable. Would we solve it satisfactorily, let us have recourse to Scripture.

1. Some attempt to reduce the whole of the influences of the Spirit to a mere external decorum ; and profanely decry as enthusiasm the belief in that supernatural change of heart, the necessity of which is so strongly inculcated by our Saviour. As if it were probable, that the diabolical sins of envy, hatred, and malice, sins perfectly compatible with outward decency, did not render a man just as much a child of hell, as the more glaring turpitude of drunkenness, fornication, and dishonesty.

2. On the other hand, some would persuade us, that almost the whole of religion consists in warm and lively feelings ; and that, unless our souls are perpetually (as it were) in the third heaven, we know but little of the nature of the Spirit's influences, or of the privileges of genuine Christianity. Hence they are obviously led to imagine, that, if sensible comforts abound, they may safely conclude themselves at peace with God : but that, if they be

withdrawn, they have no longer any right to believe themselves his children. Thus the favour of the Almighty, of him who knoweth neither change nor shadow of turning, is supposed to be as variable and irregular as the human temperature. The frequent coldness and langour of our devotions, the perpetual wandering of our thoughts from divine subjects, and the indifference with which we too often contemplate the redeeming goodness of our Lord, are indeed sad proofs of the corruption of our nature, and afford ample cause for humility and contrition : but there is no reason to think, that they are marks of unregeneracy, or tokens of God's rejection and abiding displeasure. His covenant is built upon a surer foundation than either our feelings or our faithfulness : feelings, which are subject to incessant variation ; and faithfulness, which the very best of us must own to be but too unfaithful.

5. God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.*

This is the great charter of the Christian, on which he builds the hope of his salvation. God hath sworn, that he will never forsake the heirs of promise ; but that he will be with them in every trial, and will safely conduct them to the very end of their pilgrimage. Therefore, with faithful Abraham, they believe even against hope and in despite of their natural feelings. They may be cast down,

* Heb. vi. 17

but they are not destroyed ; and, in the midst of all their difficulties, they trust that *a life is hid for them with Christ in God.** Faith is not the evidence of things seen, but of things unseen : consequently, if our religious state was to be decided by our feelings, the very foundation of faith would be overturned ; and we should have sensible demonstration of that, which we are required to believe, simply because God has promised it.

II. The same question, however, may still be asked ; *How am I to know, whether I have been renewed by the Holy Ghost ? How can I tell whether I have any right to apply God's promises to myself ? The charter of salvation is sufficiently clear and explicit ; but that will afford ME little comfort, unless I have good reason for thinking that I am included.*

* Coloss. iii. 3.

1. Let us see, whether we cannot find an answer to these queries, in the page of Scripture. St. Paul informs us, that *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other.** Are we sensible then of any internal contest of this description in our hearts ? Do we perceive a new principle, to which we were formerly strangers, strongly drawing us to the practice of holiness and all good works ; while another principle damps our ardour, discourages our exertions, and too frequently frustrates our best resolutions ? He, that has never felt such a struggle, must either be sinless or dead in sins. It is needless to say, that the former supposition cannot but be erroneous.

2. We further learn from the Apostle, that *we cannot do the things that we would.* Are we deeply conscious then, that this is our case ? Do

* Gal. v. 17

we daily more and more discover our own insufficiency? Do we lament that we cannot perform our duty better, labouring however at the same time incessantly after spiritual improvement? Many persons will readily enough acknowledge their imperfections; but the question is, in what *manner* do they make the acknowledgment? Do they *really* feel the burden of their sins to be intolerable? Do they *indeed*, and *from the very bottom of their souls*, experience the pain and grief of falling so far short of their wishes? Or do they confess their failings with as much phlegmatic indifference, as if it were a matter which concerned any body in the whole world rather than themselves? The disorders of the soul are constantly represented in Scripture by corresponding disorders of the body: hence it is reasonable to suppose, that, as corporeal pain is the result of the latter, so mental pain or grief will be the natural consequence of the former. In what manner then is

a person affected, who has long laboured under the pressure of a severe disease? Will *he* speak of his pains with insensibility? Will *he* sit down perfectly contented with his malady, totally forget its inconvenience, and take no steps to procure its removal, or at least its alleviation? Where did we ever meet with a sick man, who answered to this description? Can we then easily believe, that he is very sensible of his spiritual disorder, who speaks of it with carelessness, finds it no obstacle to his enjoyments, and feels scarcely any desire for its expulsion? If a man really perceived, that he cannot do the things which he would, in the same manner that St. Paul did, he would experience the same restless sorrow, which constrained the Apostle to cry out; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Let us then seriously ask ourselves, Do we clearly discern our inefficiency; do we lament our numerous failings; and do we labour earnestly after

amendment? The answer to these questions is almost alone sufficient to decide, whether we have any right to consider ourselves heirs of the promise.

The Apostle however is not content to let the matter rest here. He gives us a black catalogue of those deeds of darkness which are the works of the flesh, and then forcibly contrasts them with the fruits of the Holy Spirit, thus paraphrasing, as it were, our Saviour's brief declaration, *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

III. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that*

*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

1. If then we be anxious to know whether we are led by the Spirit of God, let us examine ourselves, and learn whether we work the deeds of the flesh. Do we live in habits of fornication and uncleanness? Are we addicted to the foul sin of drunkenness? Or, supposing that we are free from these external abominations, are we equally guiltless of internal wickedness? Do we set up the world as an idol in opposition to the living God? Do we indulge in sentiments of uncharitableness towards our neighbours? Do we entertain a proud, self-sufficient opinion of ourselves; and contend, upon all occasions, with the bitterest animosity, for what we call *our rights*? Are we uneasy and restless beneath the

* Galat. v. 19.

lawful authority of our superiors, perpetually striving to foment discord and sedition, *despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities* ?* Do we delight in promoting schism and heresy in the Church ; and, under the cloak of Christian zeal, in acting the same part now, that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, did of old ? Are we guilty of perverting religion into rebellion, and faith into faction, or of concealing the most Antichristian sentiments beneath the specious mask of piety and humility ? Let us diligently scrutinize our hearts, and see, whether they produce these corrupt fruits ; and if we unhappily find such to be the case, while we lament our wickedness and tremble at our danger, let us pray God to grant us a better spirit and to enable us

* Jude 8.

to forsake the evil of our ways. What is the awful declaration of the Apostle respecting the workers of iniquity? *I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

2. It may perhaps be said, *If God be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it? Where is the man, who does not offend daily, both in thought, word, and deed?*

We readily acknowledge, that our very best deeds are *unclean in the eyes of him, who chargeth even his angels with folly*; but the point is, in *what manner* do we bear the consciousness of our sinfulness? Are we *penitent*, or *impenitent*, offenders? Mercy is abundantly held forth to the former; but pardon is never once offered to the latter. Though God gives his grace to the humble, he stedfastly resists the proud, and the presumptuous. Were we

really conscious of the load of our iniquities, did we *really* desire to be freed from their yoke, we should feel ourselves little less incommoded by our subjection to them, than the eye does when inflamed with even the most minute particle of sand. We all know, that the very smallest mote occasions such an exquisite degree of pain in the organ of vision, as to permit us to enjoy no rest until it be extracted. Something similar to this are the sensations of the man, who truly feels his sin to be a grievous burden to him. He is uneasy and restless until it be removed ; he cannot cheerfully, or even tamely, acquiesce in its dominion ; nor can he be content, so long as he knows himself to be its vassal.

Here then we have another test, by which we may decide whether or no we are in a state of grace. If we acknowledge our sins without the least compunction and without any wish to be freed from their tyranny, our situation is in

deed most awfully dangerous ; we tremble on the very brink of a precipice, from which if we fall, we fall to rise no more. But, if we feel a vehement degree of pain and restless uneasiness in their continuance, if we experience a strong and ardent desire for their removal, if we labour incessantly to effect their extirpation, if we declare everlasting war against them : our situation *then* is good ; we have *then* no reason to doubt, but that the Holy Spirit of God is contending for the possession of our hearts. In such a case, let us joyfully welcome the heavenly visitor, and resign ourselves implicitly to his guidance and direction.

3. We are not however to be content with mere negative religion, with only endeavouring to abstain from evil ; we must also labour after the things that are good. The Holy Spirit is an active energetic principle, and is perpetually employed in new-moulding the hearts of the faithful and in leading them to the practice of

all righteousness. Good works, as our Church justly determines,* necessarily spring out of a true and lively faith; and it is impossible for those, who are under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to avoid showing whose servants they are by their life and conversation. Hence, a striking difference of character will always be perceptible between the children of light and the children of darkness: insomuch that, generally speaking, it will require no very great degree of penetration to discriminate between them; especially, if we study the strongly-drawn portraits of them, with which we have been furnished by the Apostle.

IV. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they, that are Christ's,*

* Art. xii.

*have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

1. The Christian, though originally in a state of enmity with God, has his affections so far changed by the influence of the Holy Ghost, that he now loves what before he hated, and now hates what before he loved. None perhaps of the sacred writings breathe the spirit of divine charity in a more eminent degree, than those of the beloved disciple of our Lord. They contain a beautiful picture of that dove-like temper which seems peculiarly to have belonged to their author, and may be considered as a kind of manual for the daily use of believers.

Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.

* Galat. v. 22.

From a constant perusal of them, joined with the prayer of faith, we may reasonably expect to derive some portion of that spirit with which they are animated. When a Christian considers his own rebellious and perverse nature, and contrasts it with the wonderful goodness of God, displayed in his redemption and sanctification ; his heart is softened with such condescending marks of Almighty love. He is astonished at that mercy and patience, which so long bore with his iniquities and spared him till the hour of repentance arrived. He recollects numbers cut off in the midst of their career, without ever having had his opportunities vouchsafed to them ; and the words of the Apostle instantly recur to his mind, *Who hath made thee to differ from another ?* He is deeply conscious, that he had no claim upon God on the score of a prerequisite meritoriousness ; and he acknowledges that he might justly have been suffered to perish in his sins. This conviction, united with the consideration of his

present happy state, fills his heart with sentiments of humble love and devout gratitude. He confesses the whole to be free grace, and he gives all the glory to God. Boasting is excluded, and a heart-felt humility takes place of vanity and presumption.

We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others ; but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ : by grace ye are saved ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus : that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus—For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles

*and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.**

The contemplation of these benefits excites the utmost love of the Christian, and he experiences the truth of St. John's declaration: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love him, because he first loved us.†* While his affections are thus set on things above, he does not forget to draw the same edifying conclusion from the goodness of his heavenly Father, which the Apostle did before him. *If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.‡* This is the only sure foundation of love to our brethren. The world has

* Ephes. ii. 3. 18.

† 1 John iv. 10. 19

‡ 1 John iv. 11.

often largely and eloquently discoursed upon sincerity and disinterestedness, but it has felt little of the reality; and a thousand untoward accidents will overthrow the most ancient friendships, unless they be built upon the rock of Christianity. That, which among natural men is a mere abstract idea, a metaphysical non-entity, is converted by the influence of religion into a glorious reality. *Behold how these Christians love one another*, was the constrained observation even of paganism; and such will always be the case, wherever vital religion prevails. An ardent desire to promote the spiritual welfare of our neighbours, a tender concern for the interest of their souls, and a hearty wish to do them all the good in our power, independent of any secondary motives, are some of the best proofs that we are led by the Spirit of God. *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love—If we love one ano-*

*ther, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit—If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he, that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he, who loveth God, love his brother also.**

2. When the Christian is thus in a state of charity both with God and his neighbour, he experiences that joy and that peace, which passeth all understanding; which the world is neither able to confer nor to take away. His joy is not like the mad, short-lived joys of the children of darkness, but stable and durable. It is founded upon the sense of his being reconciled to God, through the blood of Jesus Christ.

* 1 John iv. 7. 12. 20

Hence it is not liable to be affected by those outward circumstances, which shake the happiness of the worldly-minded. In the midst of persecution and distress, sickness and affliction, the serenity of the Christian still remains unmoved; and he looks forward with confidence to the recompence of reward, being well assured, that all these momentary sorrows *work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* His joy and peace, it is true, are not of a violent and tumultuous kind; they are rather a sensation of security and tranquillity, than a sudden flash of rapturous transport; they resemble the salutary and equable warmth of the sun, not the portentous blaze of a meteor. Such was the peace, which the apostles experienced, when they rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ;* and such was that con-

* Acts v. 41

fidence which made the primitive martyrs appear rather as if they were marching in a triumph, than as if led to torments and ignominy. External sorrows, indeed, the Christian must expect, but nothing is able to deprive him of his internal comfort. Notwithstanding his outward distresses, he feels all the value of his privileges, and envies not the transitory prosperity of the worldling. *Ye now have sorrow,* said our Lord to his disciples, *but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.** This serenity, though undoubtedly not without some interruptions, is the portion of the Christian through the appointed term of his pilgrimage. It may occasionally for wise purposes be withdrawn, and his sensible comforts may be diminished; but the eye of faith still looks for-

* John xvi. 22.

ward to the joys of heaven, and anticipates the time when doubt and sorrow shall be swallowed up in victory. Grief is seldom long the portion of a Christian. *A light springs up in the midst of darkness, and gladness once more becomes the lot of such as are true-hearted.* The joys of religion are the encouragement of youth, and the prop of old age. Without them we sicken even in the midst of prosperity; and with them adversity loses all its terrors. They sweeten our slumbers; they soothe our waking hours. At home and abroad, in private and in public, they are our constant companions, our richest treasures. The vigour of youth, and the blush of health, are transitory blessings; the pride of rank soon wears away; and riches make themselves wings and fly away: but the joy of a Christian, though it walks upon earth, hides its head in heaven. It is the gift of God; and God alone is able to deprive him of it.

3. An abiding sense of his own defects, and a grateful remembrance of undeserved mercies, produce in a believer the amiable qualities of long suffering, meekness, and gentleness. Differences, indeed, there will be in the various tempers of various Christians ; nor do the naturally harsh and rugged, perhaps, ever attain to the same eminence in these graces, as the naturally placid and benign. But a similar spirit will nevertheless be observable in them all ; a spirit far removed from that proud sense of injury, that haughty self-vindication, which constitutes the very essence of modern honour. A desire of mutual accommodation ; a meek endurance of the perverseness of others ; a patient tolerance of those little affronts, which are the offspring of childish petulance, and which are frequently more irritating than serious acts of injustice ; mark the characters of all real Christians. He, to whom nature has given less of the milk of human kindness, mourns in private over those sallies into which he is some-

times hurried, and labours incessantly to check the impetuosity of his temper. On the other hand, he, who has received a more plentiful share of the milder affections, blesses God for his bounty, and rejoices in the cultivation of his talent. All are not born with the amiable disposition of St. John ; but all are enabled, in a sufficient degree, to subdue innate ferocity, and to repress the sudden starts of proud indignation. The leopard is constrained to lie down with the kid, and the wolf to dwell with the lamb ; the lion and the bear put off their savage natures, and submit to the guidance even of an infant.

4. Another eminent fruit of the Spirit is goodness, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, but without the assistance of the Holy Ghost no man can attain to holiness ; hence goodness is rightly enumerated among the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian will not allow himself to indulge in the commission of *any* sin. The

same sense of duty, which restricts him from fornication and uncleanness, forbids him also to violate the laws of temperance and moderation. He is not satisfied with a *partial* observance of God's commandments ; his principle is *universal* and unlimited obedience. He seeks not to extenuate a favourite vice ; he strives not to persuade himself, that it is only a venial infirmity : he rather labours to eradicate it entirely from his breast, and to tear it away, though it be as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Yet while he struggles to attain personal holiness both in thought, word, and deed ; he carefully guards against the fatal error of trusting to it for his justification. When he has done all, he still acknowledges himself to be an unprofitable servant ; and places all the hopes of his salvation, *solely* upon the merits of his Redeemer.

5. This stedfast reliance upon the all-sufficiency of the blood of Christ is the grand and most important gift of the Spirit. Faith is the

tree, from which all other graces spring ; the shield, which is to defend us from the assaults of the powers of darkness ; the sure rock, upon which we must lay our foundations. That faith, which is the fruit of the Spirit, is not a barren, inactive belief, a cold, speculative assent to the truth of our religion ; but a lively, energetic principle, which God alone is able to instill into the heart. We may be irresistibly compelled to a bare belief by the mere force of evidence ; but, unless God is pleased to superadd to it a Christian faith, it will only be the same conviction as that, which forces the devils to tremble. A man must believe *with the heart* to righteousness,* not simply with the *head* ; or he will derive but little benefit from the orthodoxy of his faith. *Not every one, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my*

* Rom. x 10.

Father, which is in heaven. Christian faith is a grateful acknowledgment of the mercies of redemption ; an unshaken confidence in the word of him, who hath promised ; the instrument, by which we receive the benefits of Christ's death and passion ; and the main-spring, which occasions and regulates all our actions. It implants love in the heart, and produces purity in the conversation. It is the seed of all goodness, and the fruitful parent of all those graces which adorn the Christian profession. Through faith, the weak become strong ; the doubtful, resolute ; and the timid, courageous. Faith holds up before their eyes the prospect of a heavenly kingdom, and convinces them of the emptiness of earthly enjoyments. It enables them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to fear no difficulties, and to shrink from no dangers. It teaches them *to draw near in full assurance of hope, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and their bodies washed with pure water, and to hold fast*

their profession without wavering, for he is faithful that promised. It enables them to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and to run with patience the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, who for the joy, that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty of heaven. In short, faith is the middle link, which connects the visible and invisible worlds ; which supports us in this life, and fits us for the life to come.

V. Such are the blessed fruits of the Spirit of God : a total change takes place in the heart ; and along with it a total change in the motives, the actions, and the conversation. An answer is now obtained to the important question, *Have I been renewed by the Holy Ghost ?* Try yourself by the Christian standard ; examine yourself diligently ; and see, whether you produce those

fruits, which are meet for repentance. Do you indulge in the practice of any known sin? Do you suffer yourself to be enslaved by the diabolical passions of envy, hatred, and malice? Do you find a selfish spirit predominate, instead of that generous and diffusive love, which is the peculiar characteristic of Christianity? So again, if you be happily conscious that such is not your case, do you perform your good deeds from a sincere desire of promoting the honour of God and the cause of religion, rather than from vain-glory and ostentation? Do you strive in all things to consult the will of the Most High, however it may cross your own private inclinations! And do you labour to subdue and eradicate every unkind emotion and every vicious propensity? *Hereby we do know, that we know Christ, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily*

*is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.** If then we would know, whether we be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, let us consider how far we imitate the example and tread in the steps of our blessed Saviour.

1. Perhaps some dejected self-condemned penitent may be ready to exclaim ; *Alas ! who may abide when God cometh in judgment ? My transgressions and rebellions are so numerous ; my good deeds are so few, so trifling, and so ill-performed ; my perverseness of temper is so incorrigible ; my selfishness is so deeply rooted ; my love to God and my brethren is so feeble, so insincere, and so lukewarm ; that I can scarcely venture to conclude, that I have received the*

* 1 John ii. 3.

Holy Spirit into my heart. When I see the progress which other Christians have made in holiness, and compare it with my own backwardness; when I contrast their cheerful zeal with my own reluctance and indifference: I appear to myself to be scarcely worthy of bearing even the name of a believer; much less of being a suitable residence, a fit temple, for the Holy Ghost. I stand condemned by my own conscience; and how can I hope that God will acquit me?

Such cases as these are far from being unfrequent; but, though they may be painful, they are the very reverse of being dangerous. Let a person in this situation consider the wide difference between his state of mind, and that of the gay luxurious worldling. While the one is depressed even to the very dust by a deep sense of his own unworthiness, the other is totally free from all such disquieting reflections. He sees not his sinfulness, and perceives not his

danger. He is little concerned either about the promises, or the terrors, of religion ; and fancies that he cannot but be safe in the road which is trod by so many thousands besides himself.

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows.
 While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
 Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm ;
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
 That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

This is generally the situation of the voluptuary ; and is it more safe, because the danger is concealed ? Can his condition be thought preferable to yours ? God has been pleased in his mercy to open the eyes of your understanding, and to show you the hideous gulph which yawns at your feet. Can this be a sign of his enmity towards you ? Surely it is rather a mark of his loving kindness, a proof that he has not yet forgotten to be gracious. You might still have

been wrapt in the sleep of spiritual insensibility like numbers, who must daily occur to your observation ; and would you be willing to exchange your situation for theirs ? You will readily answer ; No. Why then, let me ask, should you doubt, but that God, who has begun a good work in you, will also in his own due time accomplish it ? You cannot distrust either his power, or his love. He is able to save even to the uttermost ; and his love will never permit him to reject *any* afflicted sinner, that comes to him in his son's name.

2. You will perhaps say ; *I find within myself such little evidence of my being under the guidance of the Spirit, that I dare not hope to meet with a favourable reception from God.*

Consider the reason, *why* Christ came into the world : was it to save the just, or the unjust ; the angel, or the sinner ? If we had nev-

er deflected from our original purity, should we have had any need of a Saviour? Guilt, not innocence, requires expiation. *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* The question is not, whether you have attained to immaculate perfection; but whether you are heartily sorry for your imperfection, and labour to make greater advances in holiness. Your very self-condemnation shows, that you possess at least one Christian grace, that of humility; and your grief is a proof, that you have the desire to become better. Reflect then a moment; whence can this humility and this desire have proceeded? Are they the deeds of the flesh, or the fruits of the Spirit?

3. *But I fear, that these are the only fruits which I produce; and that they alone are scarcely sufficient to prove, that I am in a state of grace.*

Do you imagine then, that you are to attain to the summit of Christian practice, before you have well set out upon your journey? There is a *growth* in holiness, as well as in the natural body : neither of them attain to their full stature *suddenly* : and we must be content in both cases to be children, before we are men. The main point is, whether or no, you are pressing forward ; if you are, however slow and even insensible your progress may be, it is a proof that the spiritual life is not extinct. Your present situation may be uncomfortable ; and it is wisely ordered, that it should be so. It effectually prevents you from resting satisfied with your present attainments, and constrains you to labour more abundantly. In the mean time, remember, for your comfort, the gracious promise of him, who spake as never man spake. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall*

*inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.** Thus is heaven promised as the reward of your humiliation; comfort, as the happy result of your sorrow; and the fullest satisfaction, as the end of your eager desire after a more perfect communion with God.

4. After all, it may very possibly be, that you have made a much greater progress in religion, than you yourself are conscious of. That very Christian, whom you look up to as so much your superior, may perhaps at the same time be mourning his own deficiency in those graces, which to him seem to flourish much more abundantly in *your* heart. They, who are the most advanced in holiness, have always the most accurate perception of sin; and consequently are much more sensible of

* Matt v 6

their failings, than others who have had less experience of themselves. They see so much imperfection in their very best deeds, so much obstinacy even in their reformed wills, and so much corruption in their purest affections; that, while they deeply perceive the necessity of being saved solely by the merits of Christ, they are apt to think no human heart so replete with perverseness as their own. Even the laborious Apostle of the Gentiles pronounces himself *less than the least of all the Apostles, unworthy of bearing the name of an Apostle*; and every Christian, who possesses the least degree of self-knowledge, can most feelingly exculpate him from the charge of an affected humility. They, who complacently view their own good deeds, and while they bless themselves that they are not like other men, verily believe that they produce the fruits of the Spirit in the highest perfection, are much further removed from the kingdom of God, than the humble, self-condemning,

penitent sinner, who dares not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven. Such an one need in no wise despair. Though his heart may accuse him, *God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.** Let him redouble his diligence, and leave the rest in the hands of his Redeemer. The merciful Saviour never yet cast out a single person, who claimed his assistance and besought his intercession.

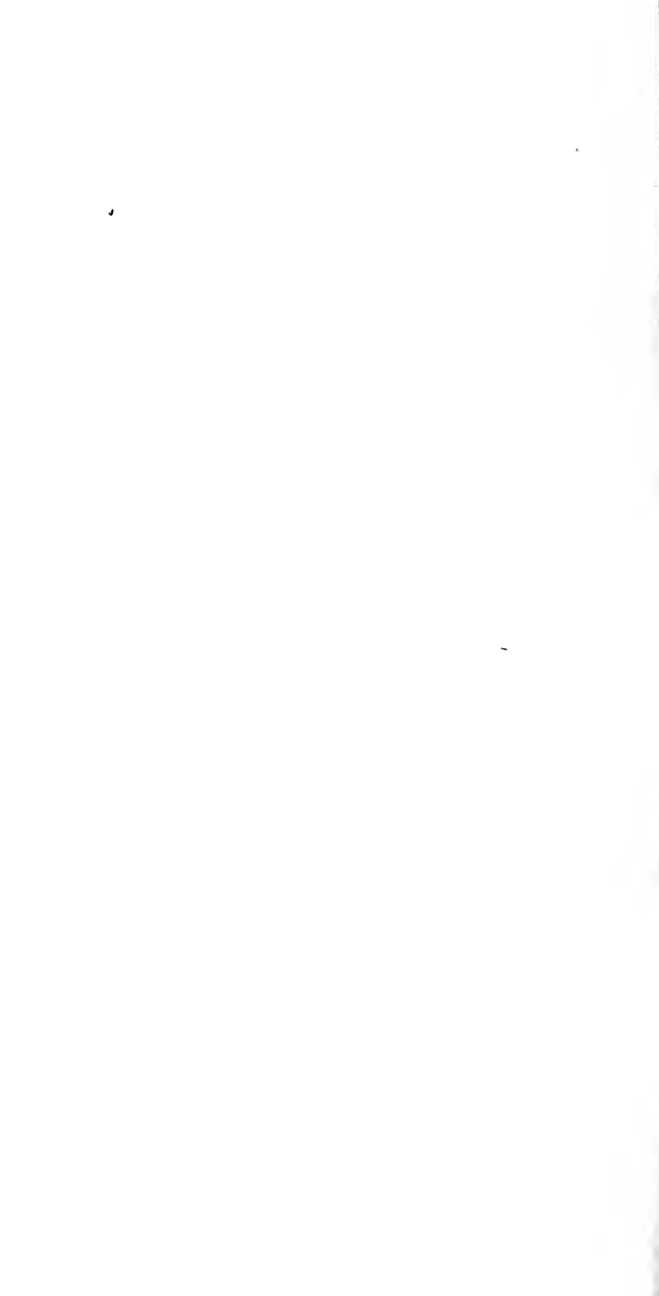
5. I cannot better conclude this description of the fruits of the Spirit, than with the beautiful delineation which St. Paul has given us of Christian love ; and which, if I may use the expression, is a miniature portrait of every sincere believer.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envyeth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not

^a 1 John iii. 20.

*puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.**

* 1 Corinth. xiii. 4.



CHAPTER VIII.

The constant influence of the Holy Spirit necessary to convey us in safety to the end of our pilgrimage.

WHEN a man has been once deeply convinced of the extreme sinfulness of his heart, and has discovered from repeated lapses his utter inability to walk in the way of God's commandments by any inherent strength of his own; he will naturally be anxious to learn, how he is to arrive in safety at the end of his pilgrimage. He knows too well by bitter experience, that the moment he is left to himself, he is sure to fall more or less from that

degree of Christian perfection, to which he had previously attained. When the supporting arm of God is withdrawn, as a trial of his faith, and in order to convince him of his frailty, his strength withers, his spiritual faculties decay, and he *becomes weak like any other man*.* He finds that the *occasional* assistance of the Spirit is not sufficient; but that he requires it every day, every hour, every minute.† As the body is unable to perform its functions, unless constantly supplied with the breath of life; so does the soul constantly require the vivifying inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

In Scripture, spiritual ideas are conveyed to our minds by natural objects; nor is it

* Judges xvi. 17.

† “Opus est nobis *quotidiana* sanctificatione, ut qui quotidie delinquimus, delicta nostra sanctificatione *asidua* repurgemus.” Cyprian. de Orat. Domin.

possible to form a conception of them through any other medium, than that of some one of our senses. If the Holy Ghost bore no other denomination than that of *the third person of the Trinity*, we should be unable from such a title to form any definite notion of his attributes. But when he is styled *Ruach* and *Pneuma*, words which primarily signify *the air in motion*, we are led to conclude, that there must be some analogy between his influence upon the soul and that of the atmosphere upon the body. This persuasion is strengthened by finding, that the same terms are invariably used to describe the action both of the divine and the material spirit. The play of the lungs, by which the atmosphere is received into our animal frames, is termed *inspiration*; the very name, by which the conveyance of supernatural powers to the mind, is uniformly designated. But we are not to confine the term *inspiration* merely to the gift of prophecy: our church teaches us to give it a much more

extensive meaning, and to apply it to that ordinary assistance of the Spirit, which every believer is intitled to expect. She directs us to pray, “that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by his *inspiration*,”* and “that by his holy *inspiration* we may think the things that be good;”† thus clearly showing, that our reformers, though they rejected all vain and fanatical pretensions to the gift of prophecy or the authority of revelation, yet decidedly maintained the necessity of the constant *ordinary* inspiration of the Spirit. What that inspiration is, hath already been abundantly shown in considering those operations of the Holy Ghost, which take place in the soul of every believer; I mean the enlightening of the understanding, the rectifying of the will, the purification of the affections, and the produc-

* Collect in Commun. Service.

† Collect to the 5th Sund. after Easter.

tion of those graces which the Apostle terms *fruits of the Spirit*.*

In consequence of the air being thus the appointed emblem of the third person of the

* “ We find in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, that the persons of the eternal Three, and their economical offices and operations in the spiritual, are represented by the three conditions of the celestial fluid, and their operations in the material world. Thus the peculiar emblem of the Word, or second Person, is the *Shemesh* or *Light*; and he is, and does, that to the souls or spirits of men, which the material or natural light is and does, to their bodies. The third Person has no other distinctive name in Scripture, but *Ruach* in Hebrew and *Pneuma* in Greek, both which words in their primary sense denote *the material spirit*, or *air in motion*; to which appellation the epithet *Kadesh*, *Hagion*, *Holy*, or one of the names of God, is usually added; and the actions of

Trinity, our Lord compares the operations of the one to the operations of the other,* and communicates the gift of the Holy Ghost to his disciples by breathing upon them.† That wonderful effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was attended with *a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind*, expressive of those miraculous powers, which were the instrument of producing so great a revolution in the superstitions of Paganism ; and, in the mystic epithalamium of Solomon, the fructification of the church is described by the soft

the Holy Spirit in the spiritual system are described by those of the air in the natural.” Parkhurst’s Hebrew Lexicon Vox 272.

* John iii. 3.

† John xx. 22

breezes of the south wind blowing among the aromatic plants of an eastern garden.*

If we wish then to understand the manner in which the Spirit operates upon the soul, we must inquire in what manner the air operates upon the body. Now we find, that the air surrounds the body on all sides, is perpetually inhaled by it, and is so necessary to its health, that death is the certain consequence of its being withdrawn. In a similar manner, so long as the Holy Ghost animates the soul of the Christian, it enjoys the highest degree of spiritual health; if the vivifying principle be in part withdrawn, the soul languishes; and if it

* Cantic. iv. 16. Our translators, in the title which they have prefixed to the fourth chapter of this divine song, give it as their opinion, that in the sixteenth verse "the Church prayeth to be made fit for the presence of Christ."

be once entirely removed, what is figuratively termed *the second death* immediately takes place.* We are no more able to advance in our heavenly pilgrimage without the constant inspiration of the Holy Ghost, than we should be to accomplish some long journey upon earth without the perpetual inspiration of the atmosphere. To be deprived of either is equally fatal; the one to the spiritual, the other to the natural economy.†

* Revel. xx. 14.

† ‘The branch can bear no fruit, nor preserve nor ripen that which it hath, but by its unity with the root: light continues not in the house, but by its dependence on the sun; shut out that, all the light is presently gone. Take water away from the fire, and its nature will be presently stronger than the heat it borrowed, and suddenly reduce it to its wonted coldness. So we can do nothing but by the constant supplies of the Spirit of Christ. He, that

On this account it is a most important matter to inquire, what scriptural reasons we have to expect the *unceasing* assistance of the Holy Spirit; for melancholy indeed would be our situation, had we the road to everlasting life merely pointed out to us, and were we thenceforward left to pursue it by the unaided exertion of our own strength. The hearts of the stoutest would be appalled at the sight of the dangers and difficulties which everywhere

begins, must finish every good work in us. He, that is the author, must be the finisher of our faith too. Without him, we cannot will nor do any good. Without him, when we have done both, we cannot continue, but shall faint in the way. His Spirit must lead us. His arm must heal and strengthen us. As we have received him, so we must walk in him: without him we cannot walk. God is the God of all grace: to him it belongeth not only to call, but to perfect; not only to perfect, but to strengthen, stablish, settle us." Bp. Reynold's *Sinfulness of Sin*, p. 139.

present themselves, unless they were convinced that God himself was on their side ; and the spirits even of the most vigorous would fail them, if it were a matter of doubt whether the Redeemer might not possibly desert them in the last stage of their pilgrimage. Arguing only from the bare light of reason, it surely is unworthy of the goodness of God to suppose, that he would forsake his children in their greatest need, and leave them exposed in their declining years, an unresisting prey to all the malice of Satan.*

* It was the fear of this that caused David to exclaim :
Cast me not away in the time of age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth me—Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am grey-headed ; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to all them that are yet for to come. Psalm lxxvi. 8 15

The gracious Lord, however, in his mercy, has not left us to our own vague conjectures and unsatisfactory probabilities. On the contrary, he has armed the Christian with an abundance of precious promises ; and has fortified his mind, against the hour of danger, with the most soothing assurances of his friendship and protection. He knoweth what is in man ; and has therefore provided him with armour of proof, to enable him to stand fast in the evil day of peril and adversity. He has repeatedly declared, that he will never forsake his servants, unless they resolutely and with a high hand forsake him ; but that he will preserve his heritage from all the assaults of hell, and safely conduct them into the realms of everlasting happiness.

This God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death. Many are*

* Psalm xlviii. 14.

the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee ; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.† Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.‡*

Similar to these are the gracious assurances contained in the New Testament, which are admirably calculated to strengthen the hearts of the feeble and the dejected.

I know in whom I have believed, says the Apostle, and am persuaded that he is able to

* Psalm xxxiv. 19.

† Psalm lv. 22.

‡ Isaiah xli. 10

*keep that which I have committed to him until that day. *Father, says our blessed Saviour, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.†*

In order to show the faithful how little they have to fear from the assaults of their enemies, and to convince them that God is on their side, Christ builds the safety of his Church upon Omnipotence itself: when *that* fails, the ultimate felicity of believers will be insecure; but till then, the gates of hell can never prevail against them. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give*

• 2 Tim. i. 12.

† John xvii. 24.

unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.†*

The Almighty himself, moreover, mercifully foreseeing what a hindrance it would be to his children in their spiritual progress if they had not good reason to rely upon his

* The strength of the original Greek is much impaired in our translation, by inserting the word *man*; instead of the word *one*, after the pronoun *any*; for the passage when thus rendered, hath the appearance of limiting the declaration of Christ to a promise of protection only against *human* efforts. Τίς and οὐδείς evidently relate, not merely to *terrestrial*, but also to *infernal*, enemies.

† John x. 27.

faithfulness, has confirmed the immutability of his counsel by an oath;* and has been pleased to reveal himself to man by the two names of *Jehovah* and *Elohim*, the one descriptive of his self-existence, and the other allusive to that covenant which the eternal Three have sworn to ratify. This is the steadfast anchor of the soul; the firm assurance of the certainty of all God's promises; the termination of strife; and the earnest of immortality.† *God is not a man that he should lie; neither*

* Heb. vi. 17.

† “ Si tibi vir gravis et laudabilis aliquid polliceretur, haberes utique pollicenti fidem, nec te falli aut decipi ab eo crederes, quem stare in sermonibus atque actibus suis scires: nunc Deus tecum loquitur; et tu mente incredula perfidus fluctuas? Deus de hoc mundo recedenti tibi immortalitatem atque æternitatem pollicetur; et tu du-

*the Son of Man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?**

But, notwithstanding God hath graciously promised that he will never forsake those that love him; yet, since man hath now recovered his lost freedom of will by the preaching of the gospel, he may abuse it, like Adam, to his own destruction. As a man in the full vigour of health may be guilty of self-murder; so may a Christian commit what may be termed

bitas? Hoc est Deum omnino non nosse: hoc est Christum credentium Dominum et magistrum peccato incredulitatis offendere: hoc est in ecclesia constitutum fidem in domo fidei non habere." Cyprian. de Mortal.

* Numb. xxiii. 19.

spiritual suicide. In this case, it is not God that forsaketh him, but he that forsaketh God. Hence the Apostle wholesomely advises, *Let him, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* Let him beware of a carnal security and a reliance upon sensible comforts, lest he find too late by fatal experience, that the promises of Scripture were not made to the unholy and the impenitent. St. Paul has intimated, that even *he himself*, after converting the whole Gentile world, might nevertheless be a cast-away, if he neglected to use the proper means to make his calling and election sure :* how greatly ought we then to beware,

* *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means (Gr. μηπως,) when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* 1 Corinth. ix. 27.

I apprehend, that the difference between *μηπως* and *ινα μη*, although they are both translated *lest*, is this; that the former implies a possibility of danger, whereas the

lest we gradually fall away from our first love and so make shipwreck of our salvation. Too frequently do we behold persons, who originally set out well on their religious course, at length rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, and dying in so reprobate a state that we cannot reasonably suppose them to be heirs of the promise. Like their types the rebellious Israelites, who perished in the wilderness after they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, these awful characters perish through unbelief ere they reach the confines of the heavenly Canaan : *for it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers*

latter relates only to *the using of means* to prevent something.

*of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.** Such persons seem to be pointed out by our Lord in his parable of the sower. They are the seed, which falls upon stony ground and soon springs up in full luxurianey; but, having no depth of soil, presently withers beneath the scorching rays of the Sun. These melancholy examples, while they strike the Christian with a wholesome terror, ought not to produce in him any distrust of the certainty of God's covenant. The Holy Spirit never leaves a man till after he has long striven with him in vain; nor does God ever give any person up to destruction, till he has first given up himself.

* Heb. vi. 4

The righteous may indeed fall seven times in a day, and repeatedly grieve the Holy Ghost by his backwardness and perverseness. He knows and laments his own infirmities, and his sins are ever before him: nevertheless, he resolutely strives against them, firmly relying upon the certainty of God's oath. This is his strong consolation in the midst of all his trials; if God be for us, who shall be against us? Christ hath died for us, yea rather hath risen again from the dead, and perpetually maketh intercession for us. The Holy Spirit has engaged to abide with us for ever; and the Father has covenanted to accept all those who come unto him in his Son's name. Here then is the sure refuge of the Christian. He relies upon the faithfulness of God, and diligently applies himself to the acquisition of those graces, which are required as necessary quali-*

* John xiv. 16.

fications for the kingdom of heaven. Though his mind may at times be clouded with doubts and harassed with fears, the word of promise is his sure anchor. He strives to live by faith ; the consciousness of undeserved mercy stimulates him to a course of cheerful obedience ; and he labours to render unto God the best service, the service of the heart. He knows, that the Holy Spirit is not given to supersede the necessity of any endeavours on his part, but to enable him to labour more abundantly in the cause of religion ; not to promote indolence, but to excite diligence. Hence, while *he is confident of this very thing, that he, which hath begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ;** he still continues to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.†*

* Philip. i. 6.

† Philip. ii. 12.

Such is the strong ground of consolation which the Christian possesses; a consolation not founded upon the deceitfulness of feeling, but upon a lively faith in the express promises of God. Frequently is he necessitated to believe even against hope; but, though his heart within him may be desolate, the Holy Spirit still supports him in the midst of his infirmities, and enables him to exclaim with the Psalmist, *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me.** Thus daily strengthened and sustained, he *forgets those things which are behind, and presses forward to those which are yet before him*: thus daily increasing in piety and abounding in every good word and work, he by degrees grows up unto a perfect man,

* Psalm xlviii. 14

*unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.** Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. His understanding, his will, and his affections, are no longer prostituted to the service of Satan, but are devoted to the cause of God. Being “justified freely, he is made a son of God by adoption, made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. He walks religiously in good works; and at length, by God’s mercy, attains to everlasting felicity.”†

The result, then, of the whole inquiry is this:—that man by nature is born in sin, a child of wrath, and utterly unable either to think or to do any good by virtue of his own unassisted faculties:—that, although Christ laid down his

* Eph. iv. 13.

† Art. xvii.

life for him, he cannot avail himself of the benefits which result from that mysterious sacrifice, unless a change be effected in his understanding, his will, and his affections ; so that he may perceive his need of a Saviour, desire above all things to serve him, and unfeignedly love the way of his commandments :—that, being dead in trespasses and sins, he is no more able to infuse life into his soul, than a corpse is to raise itself up from the grave :—that the blessed Spirit of God is the appointed agent to work this great change, to sanctify and comfort the heart of the believer, and to conduct him in safety to the realms of everlasting happiness :—that he is the bestower of every good and every perfect gift, the breath of our spiritual life, and the support of our drooping courage :—that through him we commence our journey to heaven ; and that through him alone we are enabled to persevere even to the end :—that when he hides his face, we are troubled ; and, should he *totally* withdraw himself, spiritual death would be the

immediate consequence :—but that we have a promise, that *he will abide with us for ever* ;* and on the strength of that promise, we go on our way, if not always rejoicing, yet always with such a degree of confidence as God in his wisdom judges to be sufficient for us.—To him we have committed our souls through the merits of Christ Jesus ; and we wait, with a humble, a trembling, reliance upon his word, for that salvation, which he freely offers to all who are willing to accept it. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand fast for ever.*† The world may frown upon us, and the powers of darkness may league together against us ; but the rock,

* John xiv. 16.

† Isaiah xl. 8.

upon which we are founded, is the sure rock,
the rock of ages.*

* How animated is the language of Cyprian, when he looks forward with the eye of faith to the happiness laid up for him in the kingdom of heaven. “Considerandum est, fratres dilectissimi, et identidem cogitandum, renunciasse nos mundo, et tanquam hospites et peregrinos isthinc interim degere. Amplectamur diem, qui assignat singulos domicilio suo; qui nos isthinc creptos, et laqueis secularibus exsolutos paradiso restituit, et regno cœlesti. Quis non peregre constitutus properaret in patriam regredi? Quis non ad suos navigare festinans, ventum prosperum cupidius optaret, ut velociter caros liceret amplecti? Patriam nostram Paradisum computemus, parentes patriarchas habere jam cœpimus; quid non properamus et currimus, ut patriam nostram videre, ut parentes salutare possimus? Magnus illic nos carorum numerus expectat, parentum, fratrum, filiorum frequens nos et copiosa turba desiderat, jam de sua immortalitate segura, et adhuc de nostra salute sollicita. Ad horum conspectum et complexum venire, quanta et illis et nobis in commune lætitia est? Qualis illic cœlestium regnorum voluptas sine timore moriendi, et cum æternitate vivendi?

Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing: and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.

Quam summa et perpetua felicitas? Illic Apostolorum gloriosus chorus: illic prophetarum exultantium numerus: illic martyrum innumerabilis populus ob certaminis et passionis victoriam coronatus: triumphantes illic virgines, quæ concupiscentiam carnis et corporis, continentiae robore subegerunt: remunerati misericordes, qui alimentis et largitionibus pauperum justitiæ opera fecerunt: qui Dominica præcepta servantes ad cœlestes thesauros terrena patrimonia transtulerunt. Ad hos, fratres dilectissimi, avida cupiditate properemus; ut cum his cito esse, ut cito ad Christum venire contingat, optemus.”

De Mortal.

*Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel : I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall : but they, that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; they shall walk and not faint.**

* Isaiah xl. 30. and xli. 11.

THE END.







